

Freedom of Information Request
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Details of who wrote and gathered all the evidence in relation to Report Two published by the Promise Oversight Board.

Information was gathered by The Promise Scotland (as part of the secretariat service provided to the Oversight Board). The Oversight Board also contributed information from their individual and professional experience. The Oversight Board worked in thematic groups to analyse the information and write the content for Report TWO. Writing and editing assistance was provided by a professional writer, details of which are in our response to your second question.

An information source and three writing packs were produced by The Promise Scotland to assist the Oversight Board in relation to Report TWO:

Plan 21-24 Mid-point update

February 2023

Paper 1/2



the promise
scotland

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Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide the reader with a mid-point overview of Scotland's progress to deliver [Plan 21-24](#). It provides evidence on:

- The Priority Areas detailed in [Plan 21-24](#).
- An overview of intelligence known to progress the Fundamentals.
- An update on the 'Next Steps' detailed in [The Promise Oversight Board's Report ONE](#).

The update also makes clear the links between the following:

- [The reports that concluded the work of the Independent Care Review](#).
- [Plan 21-24](#).
- [Change Programme ONE](#).
- [The Promise Oversight Board's Report ONE](#).



Navigating the document

Where possible, hyperlinks have been included to allow the reader to navigate to external sources. There are also embedded links within the document to support access to content.

The next steps contained within [The Promise Oversight Board's Report ONE](#) are (primarily) areas held within [Plan 21-24](#). As such there is no separate section, but these areas are highlighted in **blue** in the contents section and in the section heading.

The report is structured as follows:

- **Methodology**
 - How the content was developed.
- **Summary of Analysis**
 - An overview of context, barriers, and enablers.
- **Appendix**
 - Detail of 'desktop analysis' and 'engagement analysis.'

Methodology

Use of Language

At times in this document, the reader will see terms that the [Independent Care Review](#) was clear must no longer be used, such as 'placement' used to refer to places where children live. This is only used where unavoidable due to continued use of this language in data sets. Unless a citation, where it does appear it will appear in quotations to reflect that this language must change.

Desktop Analysis

To understand information in the public domain, [The Promise Scotland](#) team:

- Analysed documents that were published between May 2022 (post publication of [Promise Oversight Board Report ONE](#)) and 8 December 2022 (inclusive).
- Prioritised documents from key stakeholders and annual reviews, to provide overviews of what is recorded at a national level. The focus was on including published reports, although the source list includes a small number of blog posts and similar, informal updates.
- Prioritised documents from organisations operating in the relevant field, supplemented by some academic articles and informal web posts.

These sources cannot reflect the full picture as they are:

- Often self-reported updates and annual reviews.
- Represent lag, as they were frequently published to reflect fiscal year 2021-22.

Engagement Analysis

To capture information heard, [The Promise Scotland](#) collated what had been surfaced through external engagement against a questioning framework aligned to Plan 21-24. This engagement was through a range of mechanisms including:

- Promise Delivery Partner work with local authorities.
- Senior Leadership engagement with key national bodies.
 - [COSLA](#)
 - [SOLACE](#)
 - NHS Scotland
 - [Education Scotland](#)
 - [Scottish Social Services Council \(SSSC\)](#)
 - [Care Inspectorate](#)
 - [Police Scotland](#)
 - [Scottish Government](#)
 - [Children's Hearings Scotland \(CHS\)](#)
 - [Scottish Children's Report Administration \(SCRA\)](#)
- Work of [The Promise Scotland](#) to support change activity funded by Scottish Government through the [Corra Foundation](#) administered [The Promise Partnership](#).

This engagement activity is based on voluntary participation, subject to biased reporting and individual interpretation. Nonetheless it provides invaluable qualitative detail and descriptive information about Scotland's change journey to #KeepThePromise.

Confidence

There are varying levels of confidence in the analysis that has been produced for consideration. This is due to:

- **Data:** The data challenges highlighted in [Promise Oversight Board Report ONE](#) have not been addressed:
 - *"As anticipated, we found the data available to be insufficient for understanding children's lives, and incomplete in providing information for us to properly do our job."*

- **Scope:** This summary document is based on analysis of a limited number of available documents and specific engagement activity. It therefore cannot identify coverage or gaps with certainty, but on some topics where there has been a higher volume of information gleaned, both through desktop research and engagement, there is a higher level of confidence that this reflects current realities. These are indicated with a 🍷 next to the section heading.

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Progress against Plan 21-24

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Summary of Analysis

Progress of Scottish Government Keeping the Promise Implementation Plan

The Scottish Government has reiterated its commitment to #KeepThePromise by 2030. Following the publication of the [Keeping the Promise Implementation Plan](#) in March 2022, Government report a range of work to drive forward actions and commitments.

- **Developing A Theory of Change**

To support alignment of activities across the 26 Directorates with a confirmed interest, the Scottish Government Keeping the Promise Implementation Team have identified that a methodological approach is required to illustrate what is required at a national level to achieve the required change by 2030. With engagement with the National Chief Social Policy Advisor for Scotland, a Theory of Change is presently being developed, to plot the key drivers for change against the activities required to implement the change required.

This work has been led through a series of engagement sessions with policy teams across Scottish Government to test and further develop the drivers and actions and ensure alignment with the overall approach of [Getting it Right for Every Child \(GIRFEC\)](#) and other key policies. The next stage of this work will be to work with [The Promise Scotland](#), [COSLA](#), and wider partners as part of the Promise Collective to review the output, align with partner activity and agree shared vision on the overarching Theory of Change. This role of the Promise Collective differs from that stated in the [Keeping the Promise Implementation Plan](#) "...We will establish The Promise Collective cochaired with The Promise Scotland to support alignment and cohesion of activities. This group will be convened as a strategic forum to ensure alignment of all Scottish Government funded delivery and improvement initiatives that are working to Keep The Promise".

This work will be presented to the internal Scottish Government Promise Governance Board in March.

- **Agreeing Measures and Reporting Progress**

Alongside the Theory of Change work, Scottish Government is working with The Promise Scotland and key partners including [COSLA](#) and the [Improvement Service](#) to agree the measures needed at a national and local level to understand progress. The data which will work to #KeepThePromise to our children and families will necessarily be both quantitative and qualitative to fully understand and support their needs. The Scottish Government team is keen to work with [The Promise Scotland](#), stakeholders like [Who Cares? Scotland](#) and local partnerships to consider how qualitative data can be gathered and reported to show how change is impacting and how to present progress on an ongoing basis.

Within government, work is progressing to review all the datasets that held across policy areas, to build a picture of what data includes information specific to care experience. This work has included early development of a dashboard for reporting published datasets. The next stage will be to connect with work being taken forward by the [Improvement Service](#) as well as [The Promise Scotland's data mapping exercise](#) to agree an approach to how we present and understand data.

- **Partnership Working & Engagement**

Further to the commitment set out in the [Keeping the Promise Implementation Plan](#), the Promise Collective has been established, co-chaired by Scottish Government, [The Promise Scotland](#) and [COSLA](#). A group of core partners including [CELCIS](#), the [Improvement Service](#) and [Who Cares? Scotland](#) have met to develop the remit for joint working and data sharing. A partnership event was held as part of the National [CYPIC](#) Conference held at the SECC in November 2022. The Promise Collective will next convene in February.

As of August 2022, the First Minister (FM) has assumed lead Ministerial responsibility for the promise. Officials meet with the FM on a quarterly basis to review progress and priorities. A programme of engagement is in place to support the FM to continue to engage with the care experienced community and stand behind the commitment to #KeepThePromise by 2030.

In addition to policy updates held within the analysis and appendix, the following are noted:

- **Delivery of Children's Services**

Research to inform the future model for children services, being led and overseen by an [independent steering group](#) and chaired by Brigid Daniel, Professor Emerita at Queen Margaret University, continues. It is due to report in September 2023. The research project will examine how the current variety of delivery models support effective implementation of the promise and improve outcomes for children and families. The Promise Scotland is engaged in this work.

- **Workforce**

Engagement on workforce continues through the Collective Leadership Group – Workforce Development subgroup.

The commitment to create a National Social Work Agency (NSWA) as part of the National Care Service remains. This will provide national leadership, oversight and support for social work education, improvement, education, national terms and conditions, workforce planning and development. The NSWA will be co-designed with frontline social workers, managers, and key stakeholder organisations, including [COSLA](#), [Social Work Scotland](#) and the Scottish Association of Social Workers.

- **Support for Carers**

Scottish Government has stated that it remains committed to increase consistency in the level of financial support provided to foster and kinship carers. Discussions are ongoing with [COSLA](#) regard the level of funding required to support the introduction of a Scottish Recommended Allowance.

- **Governance and Accountability**

In September 2022, the Scottish Government announced the Independent Review of Inspection, Scrutiny and Regulation. [The review](#) is being Chaired by Dame Sue Bruce and Vice Chair Stuart Currie. The review is supported by two panels:

- The Independent Review panel – of which The Promise Scotland is a member, and
- The Stakeholder Practitioner panel – which includes representation from the care experience community.

The review has been supported by a cross Scotland consultation engagement exercise that has run from October to January. The Independent Review is due to report in June 2023.

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Early Death



CONTEXT:

The [Care Inspectorate](#) require notification of a death of a 'looked after' child, and a young person receiving aftercare and/or continuing care. There has been no further report on those statistics since the report the Care Inspectorate published in 2020. The Promise Oversight Board had that information when the first report came out.

BARRIERS:

In relation to work on going, activity is jointly owned by Scottish Government and [COSLA](#) on suicide prevention. However, there is no analysis or understanding of the links between the experience of care and suicide, despite the fact that it is known that there is a higher risk of suicide for care experienced people that extends beyond young adulthood. It is known that those with experience of care are over represented in fatalities resulting from suicide. There remains no way of understanding how many individuals with experience of care die prematurely, as a result of suicide, presently in Scotland.

There continues to be not enough done to understand the lives and circumstances of the lives of young people who died so tragically. It is concerning that the [suicide strategy](#) does not address these issues. There is a question about whether a separate suicide strategy is what is going to shift the dial in ensuring care experienced have lives that flourish. Focus on effective and relational implementation of continuing care duties would have more impact, as would focus across [Plan 21-24](#).

ENABLERS:

There is much work happening across other [Plan 21-24](#) actions that should, if they remain on track, should support a childhood that does not lead to the kind of heartache and isolation that can result in early death.

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- Care Capacity

CONTEXT

The capacity of the care sector is a point of concern that comes up in reports and in mainstream media. Most of the reporting on the care workforce includes all types of care and is thus skewed towards nursing professions and care services for adults and the elderly.

A similar (but very complex) story comes out when one attempts to better understand the capacity of the care sector that is focussed on children and families. The appendix outlines a more detailed breakdown of Foster Care Capacity, Residential Care Capacity, and Workforce Capacity, including a study by Social Work Scotland on the impact of capacity on caseloads. Due to time limits and the capacity of The Promise Scotland staff, analysis has not included adoption or continuing care support.

In inquiry into this, staff at The Promise Scotland have heard that, across all the above parts of the sector, the costs of keeping young people in care is not dropping at the same rate as the number of young people in care is dropping. Whilst the figures of looked after children has reduced, the numbers of children eligible for aftercare is increasing every year. When looking at the totals of those in care and those in receipt of aftercare support, there is still a pattern of decreasing numbers, but it is not as dramatic as the numbers of looked after children implies. This is a positive development, as children who have been 'looked after' should be cared for, for longer. However the definition of what it means to be in 'receipt of aftercare' is complex and the costs associated with aftercare are not readily available. Therefore it is assumed that increased costs are accruing despite a reduction in numbers across various forms of care.

Data supporting this statement will not be published until March and is confidential until that point, but it is reported that this trend is true of both community and residential 'placements'.

Foster Care

It is clear that the number of new foster carers is continuing to fall, while the number of new foster care households failed to meet the numbers of incoming children in 29 of the 32 local authorities (see Appendix). The majority of fostering service providers (63%) have experienced a net loss in foster care households (i.e. more de-registering than new foster carers). This has clear implications for keeping brothers and sisters together, as recruiting households who could accommodate 'family groups' was cited as a challenge in 70% of all services in 2021. However, it is also worth noting that the percentage of family groups that are separated upon entering foster care has remained consistent

since recording began in 2017 (approximately 75% of family groups remain together and 25% are separated). So, if capacity is getting worse, there is not a strong evidence base that it is increasing family group separation. Those numbers are not getting better but also not getting worse.

Residential Care

The capacity of the residential care sector paints a decidedly more complex picture. Gaps in the data and categories that do not map on to each other or allow for a direct comparison (between, for example, SSSC data, CLAS data, and Care Inspectorate data) meant that a good deal of internal analysis went into understanding the current situation. This analysis has revealed that, when including private residential homes, there are currently 1.8 beds available for every child/young person who is currently in residential accommodation. These numbers do not appear to reflect reported experiences of squeezed capacity in the rest of the sector.

Every private residential home has a capacity that needs to be met to cover the operating costs of the home (usually around 75% capacity, according to reports from [Scotland Excel](#)). Given the current over-supply of private residential beds and the fact that they need a certain level of capacity to remain open, one possibility is that cross-border placements may be propping up the financial stability of private residential homes. At present there is no clear data source for knowing how many cross-border 'placements' are taking place, and we will likely not have that information until late 2023 or 2024.

[The Promise Scotland](#) has continued to be clear that there must be a plan for ending of cross-border and distance 'placements' of children. However there are some concerns that if Scotland clamps down hard on preventing or limiting cross-border 'placements', it may inadvertently pull the financial rug out from under the private residential home sector. This is a small part of the wider 'system' but represents approximately 1000 children and young people who would potentially be uprooted if their homes close due to lack of demand/too few beds being filled. Again the promise is clear that profit must be removed from the children's social care landscape, nevertheless, more information is needed to better understand this topic to avoid unintended consequences.

As mentioned at the beginning of the Care Capacity section, and as is true for all types of places where children live, we have also heard about rising costs for residential care. Costs are not dropping proportionately to the decrease of young people in residential care.

Workforce Capacity

The majority of care providers working with children and families currently have unfilled vacancies within their organisation (ranging from 48% of fostering services to 100% of secure 'accommodations'). This is largely consistent with the proportion of organisations with vacancies within the broader care sector (including nursing and care services for adults and the elderly, which make up the largest proportion of the care sector).

Third sector care and support providers report being concerned with recruitment and retention, as well as uplifts not keeping pace with costs and the extremely high energy costs. Many are preparing for an increase in demand for their services in the winter of 2022/23 due to the cost-of-living crisis. Many also report concerns around high vacancy rates and the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on their current staff, who are operating while short staffed and are themselves sometimes struggling to afford basic necessities.

When it comes to social workers, a recent study (see Appendix) found that the intersection of increased complexity of cases, a growing administrative burden, and an increasingly complex policy landscape, combined with a social work workforce which has not increased in size, has led to social workers who have, 'larger, more administratively demanding and less balanced caseloads comprising individuals with more challenging lives, often presenting higher levels of risk.'

Anecdotally, The Promise Scotland hears of local authorities who are having difficulty recruiting and retaining social workers. There seems to be a strong sense of the children's services sector – particularly social work - being stretched far beyond their capacity, but there seems to be less clarity on what the specific mechanisms and tension points are. Engagement has highlighted that these pressures impact upon the levels of practice experience held within teams and on other posts such as line management. As mentioned above, it is likely a complex interaction of multiple causes rather than easily identifiable single causes. More focused inquiry would be needed to understand more detail on this.

BARRIERS

Gaps in the data make it difficult to say much about this overall topic with any level of certainty. Reporting on the 'care sector' is often highly skewed towards adult and elderly care services, including the nursing sector, and it is difficult to tease out which of these trends also applies to the children and families care sector, much less the subset of those which are supporting children and young people currently in care.

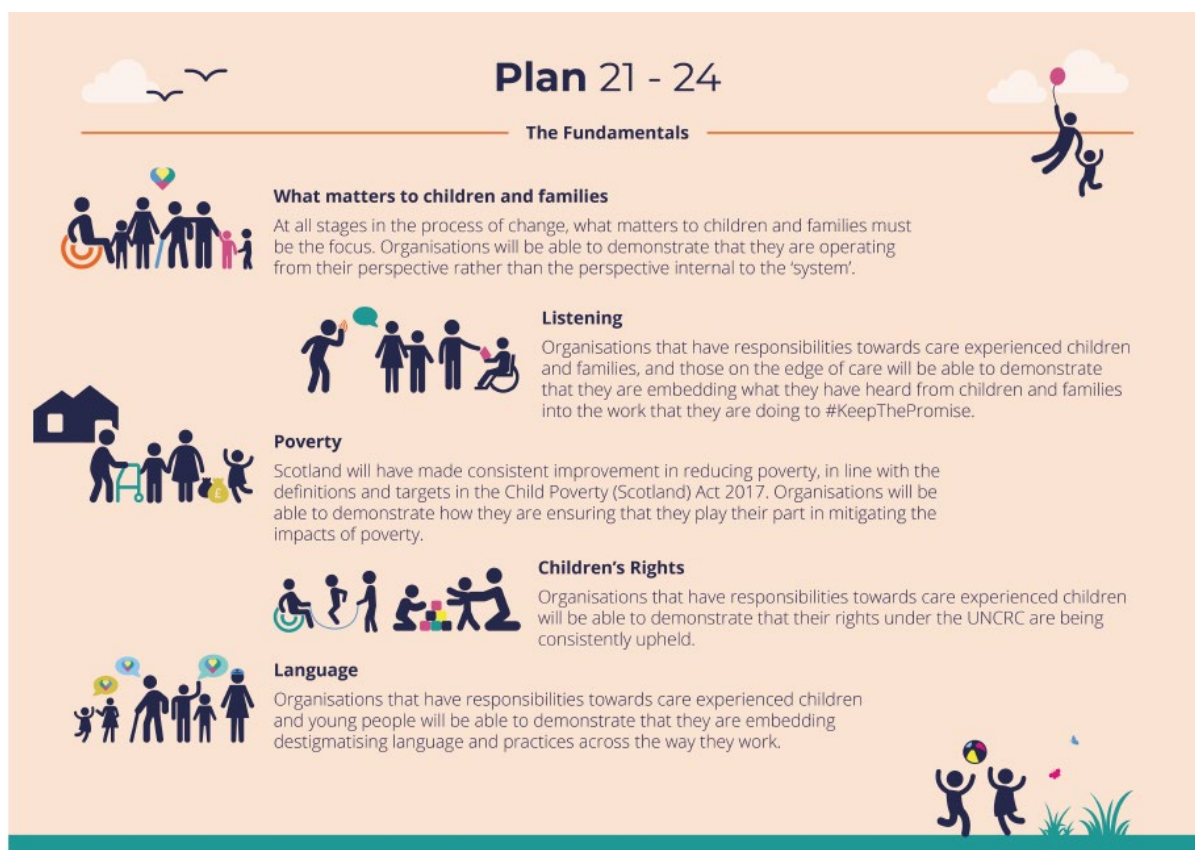
In the areas in which it is possible to identify the parts of the sector that deal exclusively with children and families or children in care, there are unclear or mis-aligned data categories that make direct comparisons either incredibly difficult or simply not possible. And significant gaps in the data remain – most notably in the lack of any clear reporting on the number or location of cross-border 'placements'.

An extremely tight labour market is pervasive throughout much of the UK economy, and this analysis has not covered whether the situation is better or worse in this sector than in other 'caring professions' (for example, nursing or other medical care, or teaching).

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The Fundamentals

A detailed in [Plan 21-24](#), and developed from [the promise](#), the fundamentals represent the cross-cutting core around which all calls to action progress.



As such, in addition to the content detailed in the discrete fundamentals sections, evidence of progress, barriers and enablers are woven throughout the action areas.

WHAT MATTERS TO CHILDREN AND FAMILIES:

Work is underway to ensure that what matters to children and families is the focus. The work of the data map has begun this through its work to:

- Understand what information is collected (at what frequency, in what format, and by whom).
- Translate what was heard by the [Independent Care Review](#) about what matters into a series of questions.

- Test systems and processes for organisations to understand their own data landscape.

It is nonetheless recognised across Scotland that further work is required around this: organisations recognise that change is required. Organisations are explicitly stating that children and families' experience is at what the heart of what they do, and there remains high levels of commitment to keeping the promise. Engagement and experience continue to demonstrate, however, that further change is required. This is seen in local areas reporting the challenges in shifting to preventative approaches in a context of workforce fatigue and resource constraint.

LISTENING:

There is commitment to meaningful listening. Many organisations recognise the need to develop their current approaches to be more purposeful and inclusive and are reporting that they are beginning the process of diversifying the range of ways that they listen and respond to children, young people, and families.

Champions Board and Participation activity, supported through codesign activities, have been the principal mechanisms to ensure integration of 'voice' within policy and practice areas. This has included activities such as local Keeping the Promise conferences held across a range of localities. This has required groups to be re-established in some areas and a renewed focus for others. Organisations recognise, however, that there are often vulnerable groups that they are missing: for instance, families experiencing poverty in remote, rural and island communities.

The level of demand being placed upon Champions Boards has been noted by some Authorities. Post- pandemic many areas have only recently returned to activity, led by the needs of the community and participation fatigue has been identified as concern.

- **POVERTY:**

The latter half of 2022 has seen historic increases in inflation and cost-of-living pressures. External forces are having a massive impact on poverty and UK Government policy provides no buffer and little support. There continues to be a likelihood of a recession, and across Scotland families continue to experience significant increases in the costs associated with housing and fuel: increases that disproportionately impact the most vulnerable households. It is recognised that Scottish Government have implemented mitigations, but these do not off-set the impact of downturns and UK-wide benefit policies. In relation to both experience and data, it is indicated that the voice of children and families is not always meaningfully reflected, and that benchmarking data is not adequately embedded to track Scotland's progress.

Evidence has also emerged that Families are further impacted by [debts to public bodies](#) and associated deductions from their incomes. More than half of low-income families with children in Scotland in receipt of [Universal Credit \(UC\)](#) have at least one deduction by the [Department of Work and Pensions \(DWP\)](#) from their monthly income to cover debts to public bodies. Third sector agencies have been working to both shine a light in this issue and tackle this: this, however, cannot address the underlying issue that families experience.

Recognising the need to better understand the impact of poverty on keeping the promise, The Independent Strategic Advisor will update the [Follow The Money](#) synopsis, seeking to:

- Compare the 2016 circumstances with the day-to-day reality of families facing today's cost-of-living crisis.
- Provide an estimate of the current number of families living in what could be described as comparable circumstances.
- Make clear the impact on families and Scotland's aspiration to #KeepThePromise.

LANGUAGE:

Organisations have stated a commitment to embedding destigmatising language and practice. Engagement with teams across Scotland has seen examples of how this is viewed as a key building block for progress, and how local tools and approaches have been identified. Removing and challenging the prevailing stigma, supporting work to reframe and consider the impact of language within key settings has been identified as a priority. To address this several areas have developed language guides, lexicons and engaged in training.

The interdependency, however, with listening and what matters to children and families, means that the ability to evidence how this is being experienced is limited.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS:

It is well documented that the intention to incorporate the [United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\)](#) into Scots Law has been stalled due to challenge around legal competency. Scottish Government has stated that it intends to lay a motion before Parliament to reintroduce the Bill: there is, however, a limited amount of time remaining in this parliamentary cycle that could lead to further drift. Furthermore, whilst devolved administrations can incorporate international human rights treaties in

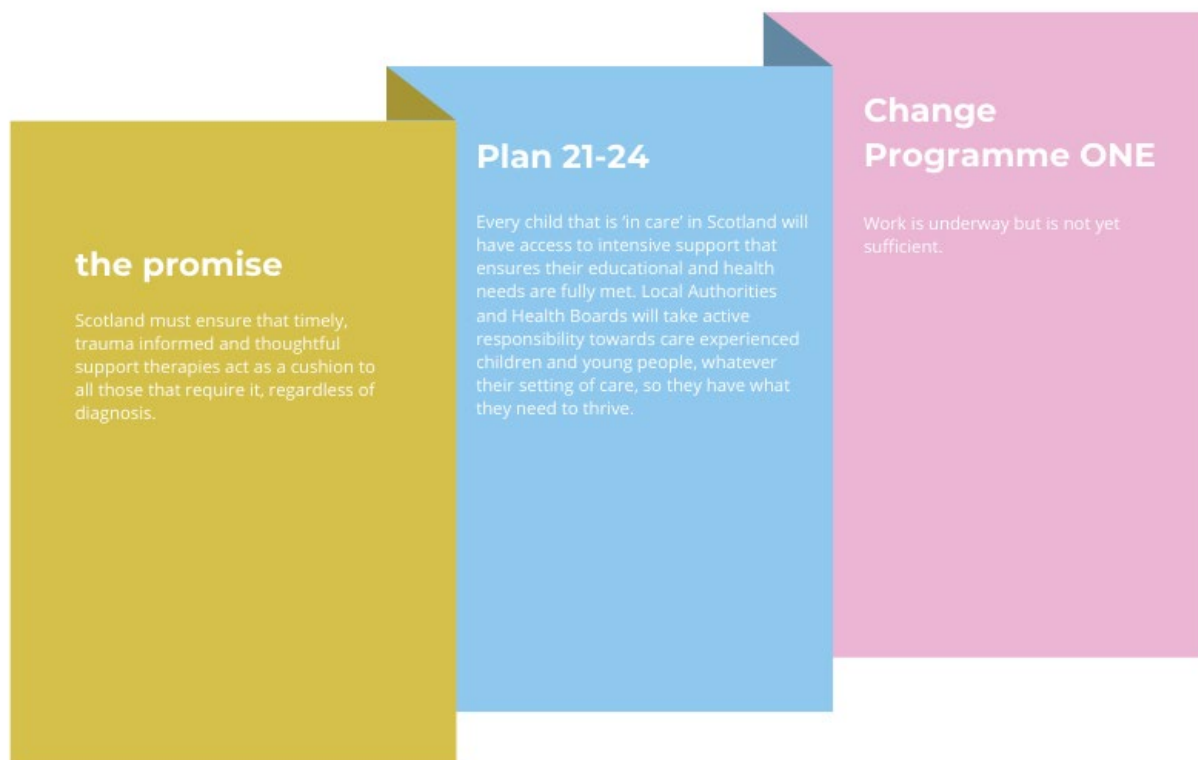
relation to devolved matters, legislation from the UK Government is required to ensure that the UNCRC is incorporated in full, including areas reserved to the UK Government.

There also remain issues around the inconsistent definition of a child: some areas of Scots Law (for instance criminal justice and mental health systems) treat children as adults at 16: this means that these children are sometimes denied the rights and protections provided to children under the UNCRC.

Despite legal challenge, and delays to full incorporation, organisations across Scotland report that they are progressing changes and developments: for instance, the Improvement Service launched a new project to support the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) ahead of its incorporation into Scots law. A range of other organisations are undertaking work prior to the Bill being reintroduced to raise awareness amongst practitioners and children and young people; and to begin to establish new practice approaches.

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A Good Childhood: Support



CONTEXT:

The [National Performance Framework](#) provides a set of outcomes that reflects the country's values and aspirations.

Mental health support in schools was improved with the addition of counsellors in secondary schools in October 2020, however this only met the level of unmet demand pre-pandemic

Children aged 16 and 17 years old are treated as adults by the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003. In 2022 the independent [Scottish Mental Health Law Review](#) recommended extensive reform of relevant legislation to ensure compliance with human rights law and for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) minimum core obligations to include availability to children up to 18

BARRIERS:

There has been suggestion that suggested that the focus of policy delivery is on achieving improvements in metrics, rather than coming back to broader aims, such as improving wellbeing and development.

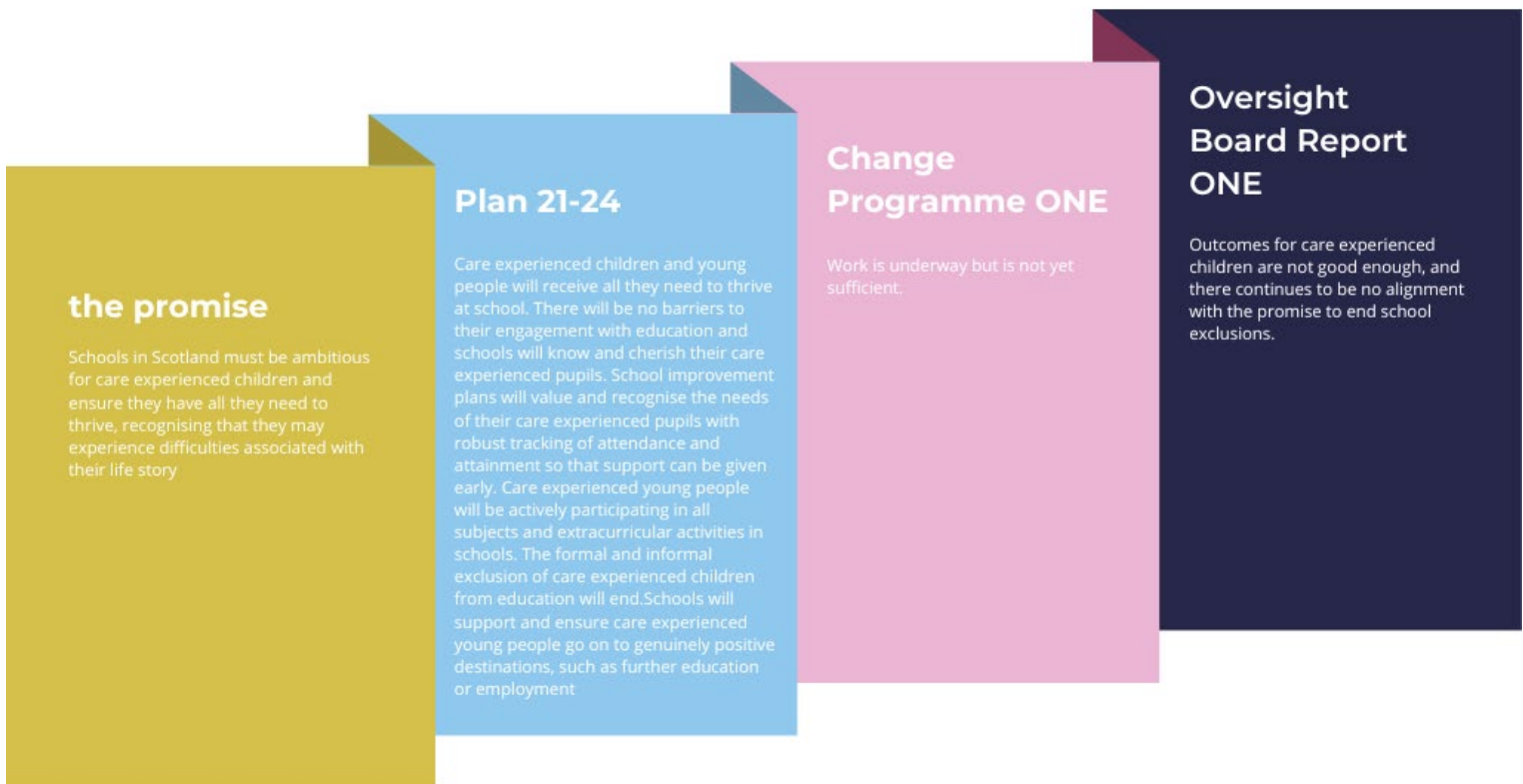
There continue to be challenges around timely access to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), including high rates of rejected referrals.

ENABLERS:

Local engagement has identified improvement work, including projects creating local level dashboards that allow school leaders to better understand the medical, health, and wellbeing data that directly applies to their students in real time.

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- [A Good Childhood: A right to an education](#)



The education of Scotland’s children and young people, and the calls to action from the promise that form the basis of this area of [Plan 21-24](#) encompass a range of factors outside of the classroom setting. As such, progress to delivering on ‘A right to an education’ is impacted by health inequalities, poverty, and other societal influences.

Throughout the policy and practice landscape, it is evident that changes have begun, but nonetheless it is evident that there remain gaps between policy and practice, and the experience of children and young people.

VOICE:

Following the [Muir Report](#), a [National Conversation on Education](#) was launched to encourage the widest range of stakeholders (including learners) to contribute towards education reform. The listening phase of the National Discussion on Education took place between September 21 and December 5 2022: it is reported that 26,000 young people took part in online assemblies as part of this exercise. Despite this, criticism continues that young people’s voices are not adequately embedded in both decision-making on a national and classroom basis. It is suggested by representative organisations that this lack of genuine participation is further exacerbated when

disabled and care experienced children, those with a history of nonattendance or exclusion, and those who have left school at age 16.

DATA:

The promise made clear that the formal and informal exclusion of children must end. Despite reports demonstrating a reduction in the level of exclusions, there remain stories of perverse consequences such as young people mandated to attend on part-time timetables. Crucially, the exclusion rate for care experienced pupils remains stubbornly higher than that for all pupils: this is despite reductions in the gap over the past decade.

POVERTY:

There has been recognition of the impact of poverty on education and policy initiatives launched to mitigate this, such as free school meals throughout primary education. Nonetheless, despite the policy intent, delays to full roll-out mean that children and young people fail to benefit from policy intent. The current provision is for primaries one to five, with an ambition for full expansion from August 2023. Beyond this, work to eliminate the impact of poverty on educational attainment continues through the [Scottish Attainment Challenge](#). Local Authorities have developed next steps in their local improvement journeys, but it has been noted that fewer than half have included a next step around data. The majority of authorities did, however, include explicit next steps in their improvement plans around care experienced children and young people. There has been criticism of the impact of Attainment Challenge funding as the poverty related attainment gap remains.

BARRIERS:

Locally, some areas are reporting challenges undertaking multi-agency work that includes education colleagues can prove challenging. This is described as in part a consequence of perceptions that keeping the promise is a 'social work' role; and due to the progression of educational reform which is a focus of attention.

Additionally, information from a range of sources indicates that despite positive policy developments and supportive mechanisms being established across further and higher education, that at times the impact of these supports is not fully realised. This includes lack of specific guidance and support to navigate pathways, and awareness of entitlements.

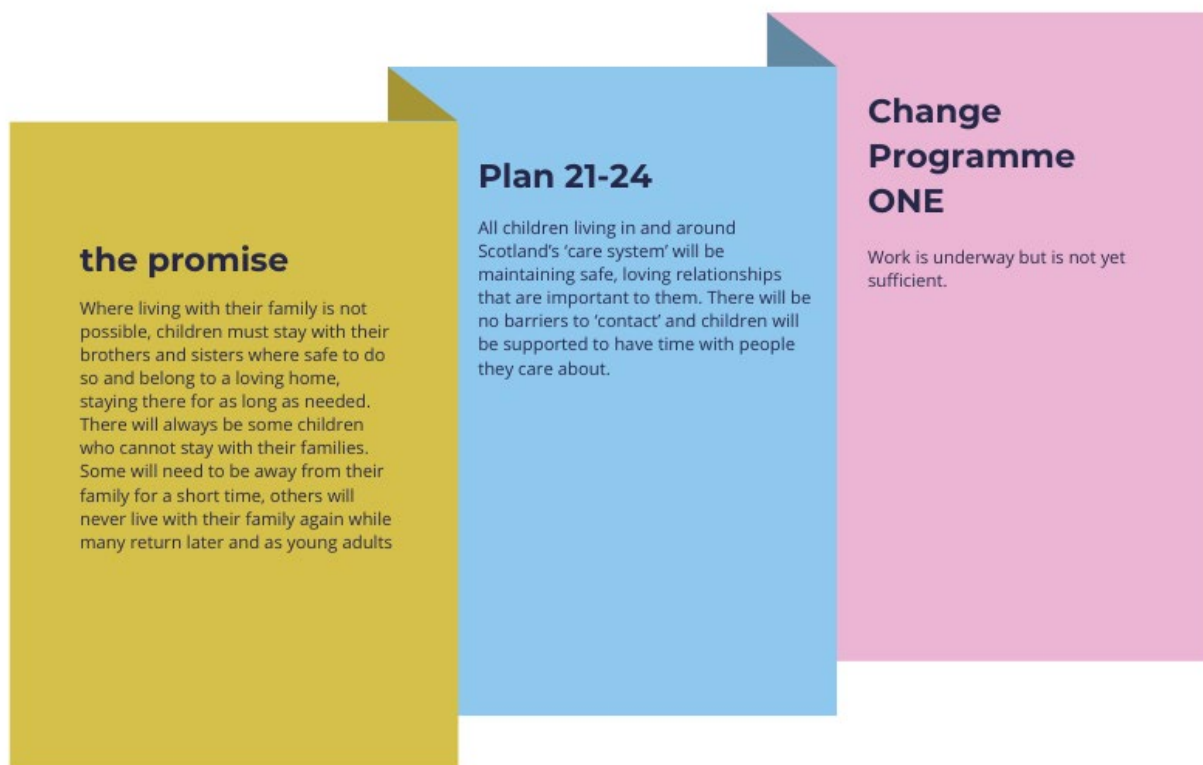
ENABLERS:

Data sets indicate that educational outcomes have improved for care experienced children and young people, but there remains a gap between those and the wider population. Some local areas have been able to demonstrate outcomes that are significantly above the national average, but more detailed interrogation of the 'positive destinations' reached would provide greater clarity around progress to ensure care experienced children and young people are given all they need to thrive.

The National Conversation and subsequent education reform represent an opportunity to centre the wellbeing of children and young people at the heart of new approaches: class sizes that support the development and sustainment of supportive relationships; and an assessment and examination system is flexible for all learners.

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A Good Childhood: Relationships



CONTEXT:

The achievement of these calls for action are dependent on the context of care improving for the workforce and those living within care, to reduce the risk of relationships being hindered by the state's response to the child's need for additional care and protection.

BARRIERS:

Despite the publication of the '[Brothers and Sisters Practice Guidance](#)', it is known that there are real challenges across practice in being able to deliver what has been required by the legislative change.

It is also known that some children continue to be placed away out with their local authority area, for a variety of reasons. This will likely impede efforts to maintain connections to their local community and in safeguarding the significant relationships they have with others.

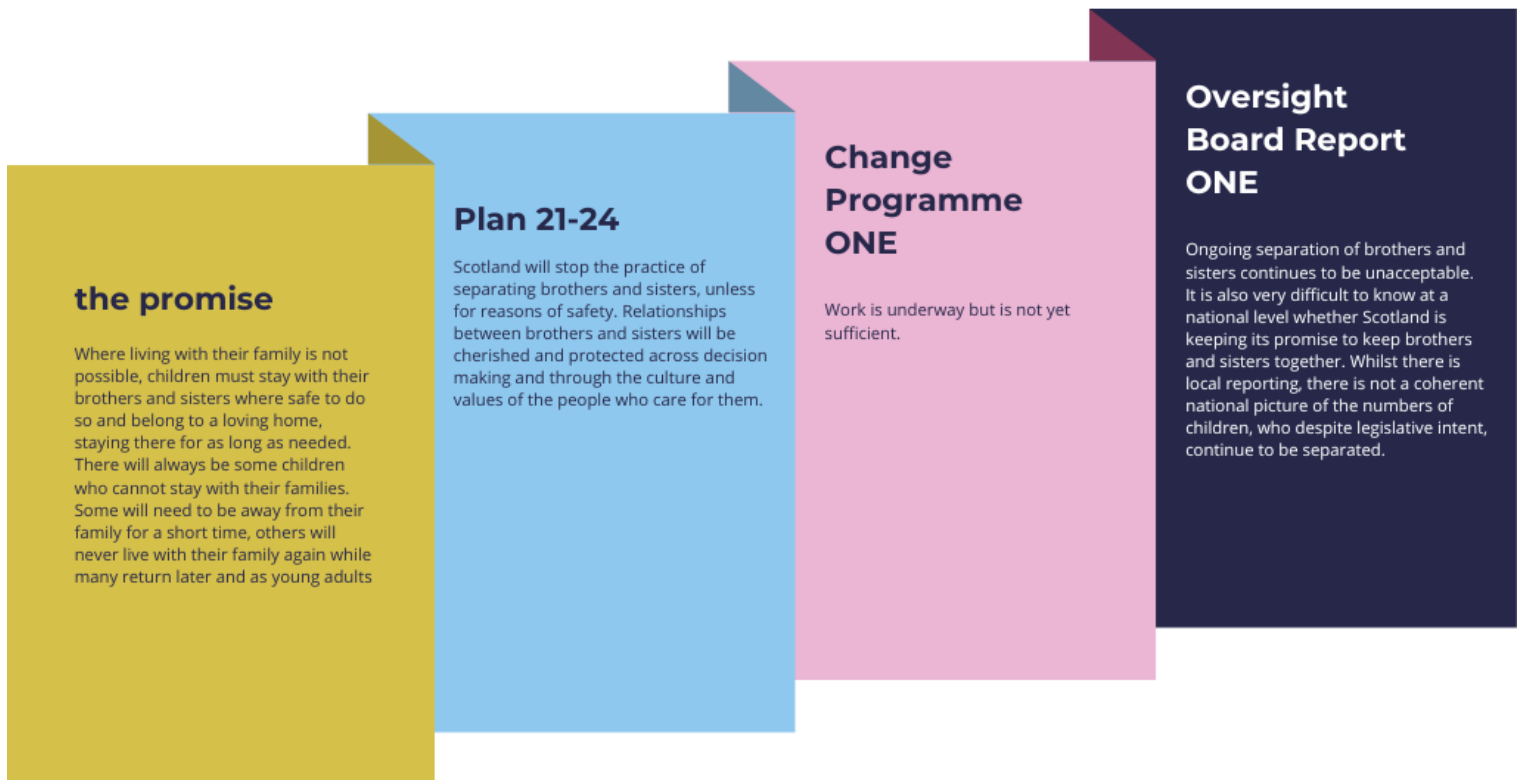
ENABLERS:

It is reported across local areas that significant effort is being made to better care for children at home within their own communities. This is seeking to protect good positive relationships but is also seeking to use supportive relationships within children and families support networks to address unmet need.

Providing direction and guidance to carers (regardless of where children are living) on how best to maintain relationships beyond care 'placements' is identified in [Change Programme ONE](#) as a practice issue. To support this, work has been undertaken including developing an understanding of how some care providers are seeking to improve how they recruit and coach staff. There is a recognition that the recruitment of carers, regardless of settings, must be clear on the hope and expectation that good relationships will be maintained beyond the end date of a care setting.

The [Corra Foundation](#) administered [The Promise Partnership](#) has supported a variety of organisations to lead on work to better support and safeguard relationships that children have. The 2021 Open Call fund from the Promise Partnership supported the Glenboig Trust to adapt its work to deliver a workplan that would better place the community of Glenboig in being more aware and inclusive of their residents with experience of care. The Why Not Trust was supported by the same fund, to obtain a greater understanding of the success they have had in supporting those providing and receiving care in once children move to live in a different place. In 2022, 8 collaboratives were funded by the Promise Partnerships' Getting it Right for Brothers and Sisters Fund. The work of these collaboratives in progressing however, are not expected or able to mitigate the ongoing systemic barriers to protecting and enabling significant relationships to flourish.

- [A Good Childhood: Brothers and sisters](#)



CONTEXT:

Legislative change has been established, with the intention to:

- Enhance the legal entitlement of sibling groups to be able to live together, even if they require to live away from their family.
- Strengthen support for sibling-like relationships, often created by having children live in places where children already reside.
- Provide clarity on the responsibility of care providers and implementing authorities to support and facilitate meaningful relationships for these children.

The [Staying Together and Connected National Implementation Group](#) (chaired by the Scottish Government and [CELCIS](#)) is due to make recommendations on next steps to support implementation by the end of March 2023. The group is also leading work to improve data collation and monitoring of implementation of this work: it is not, however, aligned to the timescales of [Plan 21-24](#).

BARRIERS:

There continues to be ongoing challenges however, with the implementation of the legislation resulting in some children and young people not having access to their legislative entitlements.

Some stakeholders have cited the challenge to deliver this change without increased practice capacity or resource despite the universally strong levels of commitment. This includes a lack of resource, including a lack of facilities to support large sibling groups and a shortage of foster carers within the area to avoid children moving outside of the area. Some Authorities have begun to review the availability of 'placements' and continued support considerations.

ENABLERS:

The Promise Scotland is aware universally expressed support by those charged with keeping the promise, to achieve the vision Scotland now holds for brother and sister relationships; whilst seeking to provide them with the legislative entitlements that were evoked by the legislative change in 2021.

Reforms have occurred to the Children's Hearing system, supporting panel members to fulfil the that a "*Children's Hearing to consider the need for a direction about contact with the child's brothers and sisters.*" It is anticipated this will result in greater focus of the team around the child in supporting and enabling brother and sister relationships to thrive.

The use of [family group decision making](#) has been cited by some as a model assisting those responsible with the care and protection of children in working in partnership with families to prioritise brother and sister relationships, despite the current resource and capacity challenges. The use of such models also seeks to increase the number of children and families who continue to be supported whilst they remain at home with their families.

Efforts of implementing authorities to mitigate the current resource and capacity issues impeding on universal implementation include efforts to source and retain more foster care settings with the ability to care for groups of brothers and sisters. The 2022 edition of the [Scottish Journal of Residential Child Care](#) highlighted work of the children's residential care workforce in maintaining sibling relationships, positive childhood experiences, and provision of support in "delicate circumstances".¹

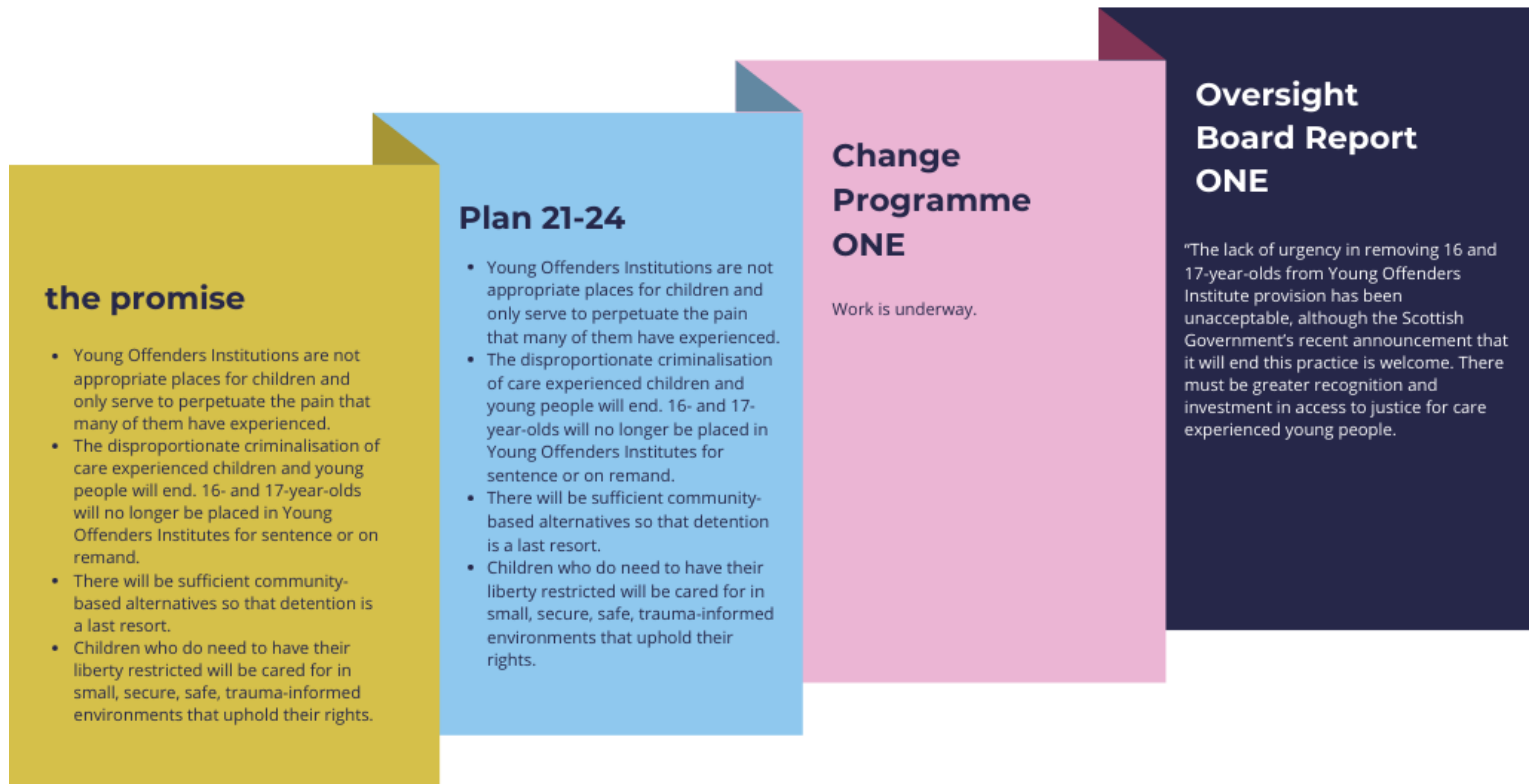
Local authority areas have advised that there have been efforts to provide training to key members of the team around the child for Scotland to be best placed to get it right for brothers and sisters. Some local areas have built in senior leadership ownership and scrutiny over any decisions to separate brothers and sisters, as well as building in

¹ Mary Morris, 'Seldom Seen Sibling Support: Exploring the Changing Experiences of Siblings in Scottish Residential Childcare Services', *Scottish Journal of Residential Child Care* 21, no. 2 (November 2022): 9.

processes to ensure children are supported to stay connected and spend time together in plans and reviews.

DRAFT

- [A Good Childhood: Youth justice](#)



CONTEXT:

The [Children's Care and Justice Bill](#) was introduced to the Parliament on 13th December 2022. This Bill will outlaw the 'placement' of children in Young Offenders Institutes. It will also seek to ensure that 16- and 17-year-olds go to the Children's Hearings System rather than the Sheriff Court although there will be some offences that are so serious that do go to the formal criminal courts.

This is broadly welcome, however there are concerns about the funding associated with the inclusion of 16- and 17-year-olds in the Hearing System and the support that will need to be provided through properly resourced Community Supervision Orders.

The Bill will go some way to putting an end to the regressive practice of childhood imprisonment. There are, however, still challenges around the design and commissioning of secure care and alternatives to custody.

Scottish Government advise that work is underway to progress review and future options for the secure estate across Scotland. This includes investment in purchasing the last bed in each secure centre to ensure places are available when required for Scottish children. A variation to the current contract has been agreed and 4-month trial underway (December - April 2023).

BARRIERS:

Two challenges were mentioned under this [Plan 21-24](#) action in the engagement material. One was that there is currently a lack of steer on engagement with the judiciary on this in respect of [the promise](#), specifically, the new Sentencing Guidelines and in relation to domestic abuse and the removal of presumption of age for evidence within The Children (Scotland) Act. The other related to the potential challenges posed by the Care and Justice Bill in relation to including 16/17-year-olds within Hearings, since under the current model this would require many more panel members to be able to properly resource the additional hearings this will entail.

ENABLERS:

In late 2022, [Police Scotland](#) hosted a conference with local authorities, third sector partners and [Children's and Young People's to Centre for Justice](#) explore better approaches to avoid children being remanded in custody and ensuring places of safety. The Promise Scotland and [Children and Young People's Commissioner for Scotland](#) attended this conference. It was well attended with high levels of understanding about the problems with remand in custody and real willingness to change approaches.

Engagement highlighted that work is underway including staff training; schemes diverting children and young people away from criminalisation; partnership work to support relational practice; amplifying the voice of children and young people and improving strengths-based approaches.

A Good Childhood: Advocacy



CONTEXT:

There is a need to understand and scope a national lifelong advocacy service for care experienced children and adults, while recognising that in the longer term the need for such an advocacy service will reduce as we create and enable a culture where children's rights are respected and upheld as a matter of course and fewer children engage with the care system following the implementation of [the promise](#). Over the next year, The Promise Scotland will work with key stakeholders to ensure that recommendations are provided to Scottish Ministers by the end of 2023. This deadline is not a target date, so if work is progressing faster then there may be an earlier report. In recognition that a service may not be up and running until 2024 as part of the scoping work The Promise Scotland will seek to identify interim measures for children going through the care system right now and care experienced adults. The Keeping the Promise team within Scottish Government are assisting The Promise Scotland with this work.

BARRIERS:

This work is dependent on work currently underway within Scottish Government on the development of a National Care Service. The model of advocacy for children currently living in and around the 'care system' will be influenced by who holds the statutory duties in relation to children and families-the Local Authority of a future National Care Service. The work will also be determined by work within Scottish Government to determine a definition of care experience in relation to the care experience grant and other policy areas.

ENABLERS:

Stakeholders expressed commitment to delivering lifelong advocacy. Many report beginning a planning and review process to scope need and potential next steps. There are examples of local areas that are significantly down this path: one local is doubling advocacy and children's rights resources and implementing bespoke children's rights service for children with experience of court contact orders.

[Who Cares?Scotland](#) provides a widely understood relationship based advocacy service for all care experienced children, this service following the principles of the promise and supports care experienced children who require/request it to access independent legal representation. In some local areas agencies are developing services for those children and young people who come into contact with the 'care system' but do not meet criteria for this provision.

The [Hearings System Working Group](#) is considering the role of the advocate and how it interacts with other professionals in a redesigned system: there is currently advocacy operating within the system but not necessarily beyond it.

A Good Childhood: Moving on

the promise

Young adults for whom Scotland has taken on parenting responsibility must have a right to return to care and have access to services and supportive people to nurture them. Older care experienced people must have a right to access to supportive, caring services for as long as they require them. Those services and the people who work in them must have a primary focus on the development and maintenance of supportive relationships that help people access what they need to thrive.

Plan 21-24

Decisions about transitions for young care experienced people who move onto independent living or need to return to a caring environment, will be made based on individual need.

Each young care experienced adult will experience their transition as consistent, caring, integrated and focussed on their needs, not on 'age of services' criteria. Housing pathways for care experienced young people will include a range of affordable options that are specifically tailored to their needs and preferences. Youth homelessness experienced by young care experienced people will be eradicated and they will have no need for any emergency provision or for rough sleeping because options are available and planned.

Change Programme ONE

Work is underway but is not yet sufficient.

Oversight Board Report ONE

It is unacceptable for young people who have been 'looked after' to transition into the homelessness system. At present it the data is not sufficiently joined up to allow identification of care experienced people within all national datasets and for us to know with confidence the extent of the problem.

CONTEXT:

Homelessness (applications and individuals) increased in Scotland in 2021/22. The increase can largely be explained as being a return to pre-COVID levels (and due to addressing backlogs from COVID).

A quarter of households who make homeless applications include children. 2021/22 saw the highest number of children in temporary accommodation, although the rapid increase from 2020/21 is due to a return to pre-COVID numbers.¹⁹⁰

Homelessness applications and assessments increased but are still below pre-pandemic levels however timescales are increasing for homelessness cases to be assessed and then closed. Alongside these figures, there is a decrease in new homes being built, long waiting lists for social housing, and increasing rents in the private sector.¹⁹⁸

The national minimum wage and ongoing cost of living crisis continue to compound access to and sustaining affordable housing, as do some Benefits being a Reserved matter.

BARRIERS:

The latest update from Scottish Government on their [Ending Homelessness Strategy](#) states that the implementation of “the prevention pathways for care leavers, young people and veterans has been temporarily paused.” Instead, the focus is located on prevention pathways for women and children experiencing domestic abuse and people leaving prison. It is possible the pathway will be resumed by the end of 2023 or the beginning of 2024, particularly pressing given the time-bound nature of actions within [Plan 21-24](#) to eradicate youth homelessness. The ‘[A Way Home Coalition](#)’ has taken a lead role on influencing the youth homelessness pathway with [CELCIS](#) and the [Rock Trust](#) progressing the recommendations.

Pathways for care experienced young people continue to be insufficient, resulting in the continued use of the ‘homelessness system’ for these young people. Whilst support has been identified as insufficiently accessible, localised and or tailored, limited data has been available to prove the efficacy of interventions, target populations at risk of homelessness, or reflect the true size of the homeless population, or intersectional areas impacting homelessness with limited insights available on those not engaging with services.²¹⁴

Challenges cited include capacity, recruitment, and retention in Through care and Aftercare (TCAC) teams. One indication that this had led in some instances to TCAC being de-prioritised by necessity due to the resultant additional pressures added to other children’s social work teams, resulting in inconsistent standards of service for young people. It is not clear if this is an isolated example or a wider pattern from the limited information we currently have.

The lack of available housing stock to meet the current needs of the population, including Residential Care and those supporting Foster Carers and Kinship arrangements remain an ongoing challenge, affecting the ability to provide ongoing support and maintain relationships.

ENABLERS:

There were indications in the engagement materials that the numbers of young people staying in ‘continuing care placements’ were increasing, as well as the number of active plans aimed at supporting young people into adulthood and independent living. One source indicated that they had seen numbers of young people accessing an aftercare service increase during the pandemic in response to increased hardship and isolation.

Additional activity has centred on projects aimed at supporting young people to develop the skills needed to live independently, with help around practical, homemaking and life skills such as money management, cooking, shopping, cleaning, and home maintenance.

A Good Childhood: Physical intervention



CONTEXT:

Restrictive practice and restraint continue to be experienced by children and young people in response to their behaviour by adults providing care and supervision in different parts of their lives.

A consultation on [draft guidance on physical intervention](#) in schools took place in 2022: it is expected that the Scottish Government response and guidance will be published in 2023. The draft guidance seeks to ensure that the use of restrictive practices in schools is used minimally. The consultation process highlighted areas that require further consideration to optimise intended outcomes. The above timeline and subsequent implementation and review It may not align to [Plan 21-24](#) delivery.

BARRIERS:

Across the residential care sector for children and young people there has been an ongoing commitment to pursue practice and culture change to reduce the reliance of restrictive practices in care settings. The change effort is not consistent across provision and therefore children's experiences with continue to differ.

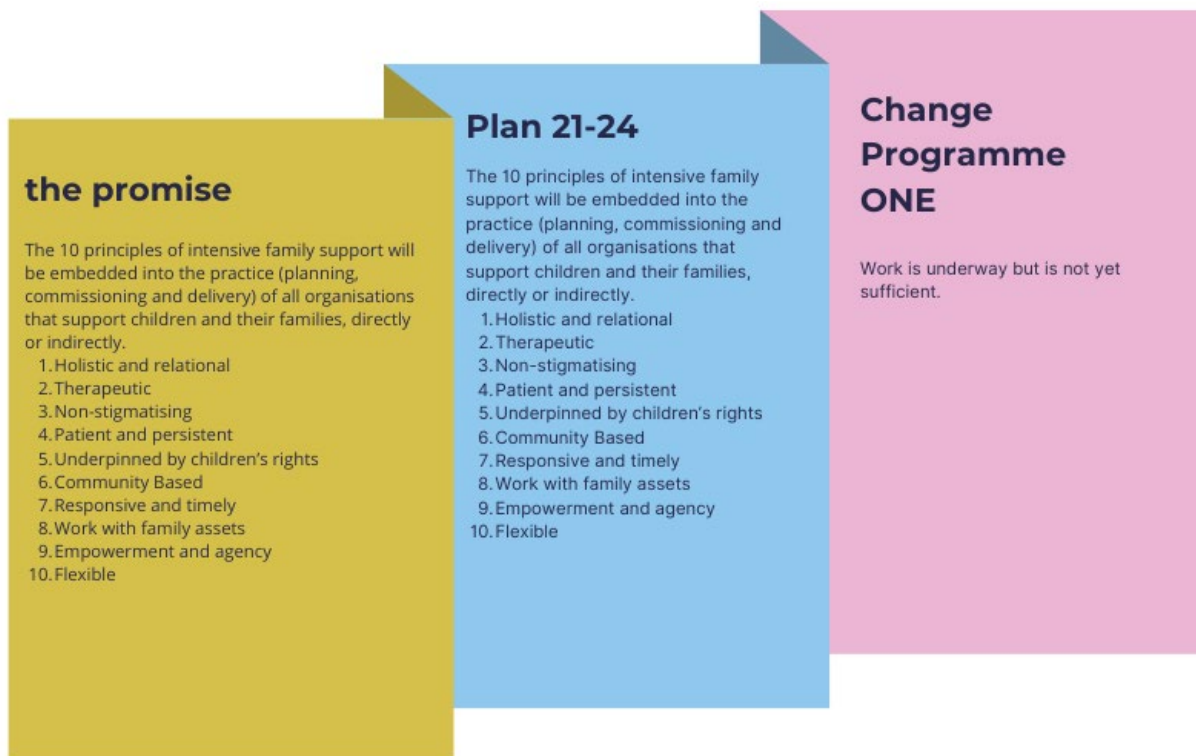
Responses to the consultation on physical intervention in school highlighted that there continues to be challenges around consistency of recording around the use of restraint and seclusion in education settings; that there is no single agency overseeing data on use; and that ambiguities in the draft guidance remain.

ENABLERS:

In October 2021, the [Care Inspectorate](#) began requiring all providers to report incidents that adhered to a wider definition of restraint. The broader definition of restraint now means that the use of seclusion and restrictive practice should be reported to the care inspectorate within 48 hours. It is important that future analysis of notifications to the regulator accounts for the wider definition.

The Promise Partnership has funded a collaborative by [Kibble](#) and [Aberlour](#), two historic providers of care in Scotland, to support others in actively seeking to achieve the vision outlined within the Promise that: *Restraint will always be pain free, will be used rarely, and only when required to keep a child safe.* This work is supporting four other providers of residential care to reflect, challenge and change current practice using service redesign thinking. This work is assisting the workforce in these settings to improve the experience of care being provided by these organisations. It is also supporting the development of a resource that will enable the cascading of learning across the residential sector to support other providers to start, or continue, their journey in minimising the prevalence of restrictive practice in care experiences.

Whole Family Support: Family support



CONTEXT:

The Scottish Government has committed £500m to the [Whole Family Wellbeing Fund](#), and to the aim of investing at least 5% of all community-based health and social care spend in preventative whole family support measures by 2030. Fuller details of this can be found in the 'investment' section.

Progress towards keeping this part of the promise has been impacted by the cost-of-living crisis, given a perceived shift back towards crisis support for families (necessitated due to the number of families who are living in poverty at present) and the challenges in recruiting staff and maintaining high-quality services in the context of increasingly tight resources.

BARRIERS:

The Promise Scotland has heard of a sense of contradiction between being asked to identify cuts and to prioritise preventative spend. Some local authorities have expressed concern about risks that Whole Family Wellbeing Fund funding and other funds earmarked for helping families could be used to mitigate against continued resource pressure (helping to ensure ends meet or the status quo is maintained rather than

investing significantly so that early help and support can be upscaled to meet the aims of [the promise](#)).

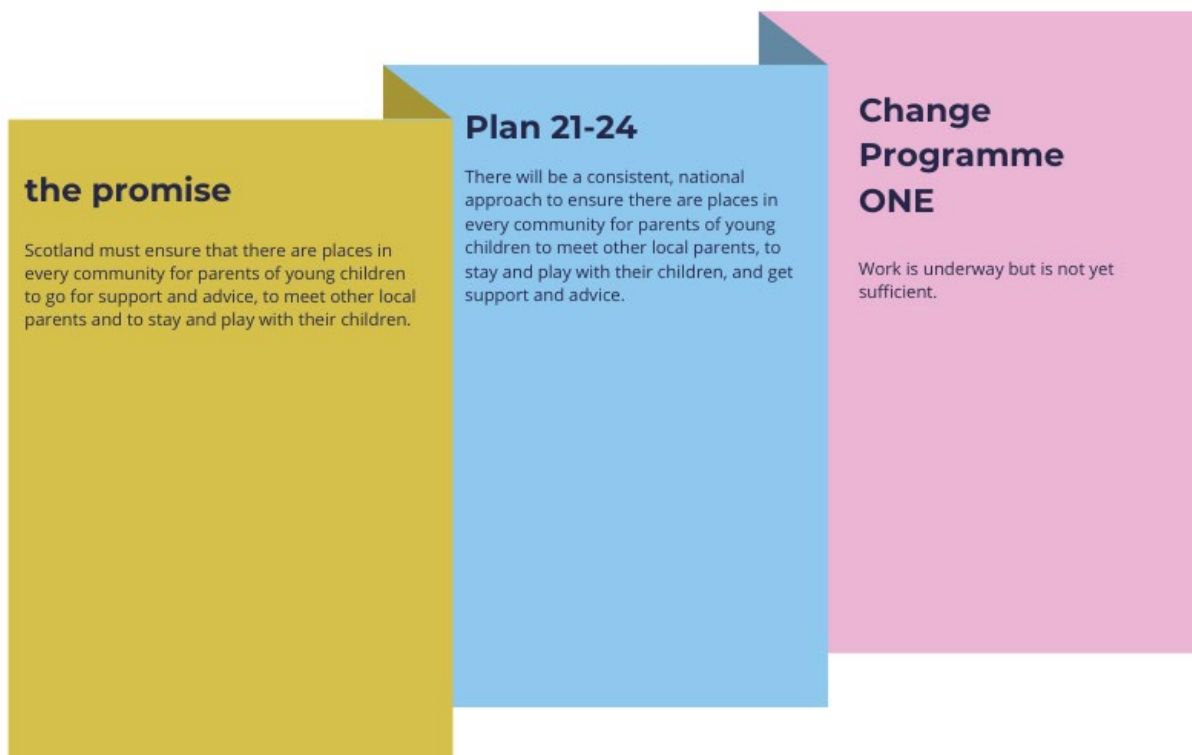
Although many local authorities will have excellent examples of progressive and rights-based whole family support services that meet the needs of children and families in their communities there remains inconsistency in terms of access to support across the country. It is also clear that the number of inter-linked work programmes relating to poverty, mental health, drugs deaths, violence against women and girls, education, family support and other areas are often operating in parallel to each other and with similar policies and initiatives intended to help the same families. At local authority level some areas are not able to identify all the relevant funding streams relating to family support services. In one local authority, there are over 150 different family support services.

Despite the best efforts of those working within this local authority the complex arrangements and funding criteria mean they are not able to deliver whole family support in the way [the promise](#) requires, despite the welcome injection of funding from their allocation of the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund.

ENABLERS:

The pending review of the variety of different funding allocations relating to key policy areas linked to family support is being welcomed. However, there must be a more concerted effort to address the concurrent and related workstreams while this is ongoing—beyond inviting different teams to meetings to offer presentations about the related work. It would be helpful for these groups to be aware of, and fully understand, the Scottish Government's work relating to family support and how this links to other policy areas, including school exclusions, housing, justice, etc.

Whole Family Support: Peer and community support



CONTEXT

The current cost of living crisis means that a growing number of families will be living under vast amounts of pressure, and in need of a wide range of supports that must be easily accessible, and available when and where they need them. There is a need to increase services aimed at income maximisation and alleviating the impacts of poverty through ensuring families are in receipt of all the financial support they are entitled to, grants for purchasing essential items, electronic devices, food, clothing.

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on communities across Scotland, with consequences that are yet to be fully understood. In terms of local service and support provision, engagement suggests a mixed picture, with some areas reporting strengthened links between statutory and community services, resulting in more timely signposting and pathways into services, reduced social isolation and higher numbers of families successfully supported within their own communities without formal social work involvement. Conversely, others have said COVID-19 responses and new patterns of work have eroded inter-agency relationships, leading to a 'them and us' rhetoric in some areas.

BARRIERS

Whilst a low volume of material was analysed on this topic, several specific issues were highlighted as being barriers to change, especially with regards to accessibility of support for families. These include:

- Timeliness- most services continue to work on a fixed 9-5 model of provision and access to support, though there were examples in the engagement materials where attempts were being made to address this.
- Limited uptake of certain community-based services- believed to be due to a lack of trust in services and perceived stigma around accessing support.
- Geography- impracticalities of ensuring truly local supports for families living in remote rural areas.
- Prohibitive cost of charges for access to local community spaces.

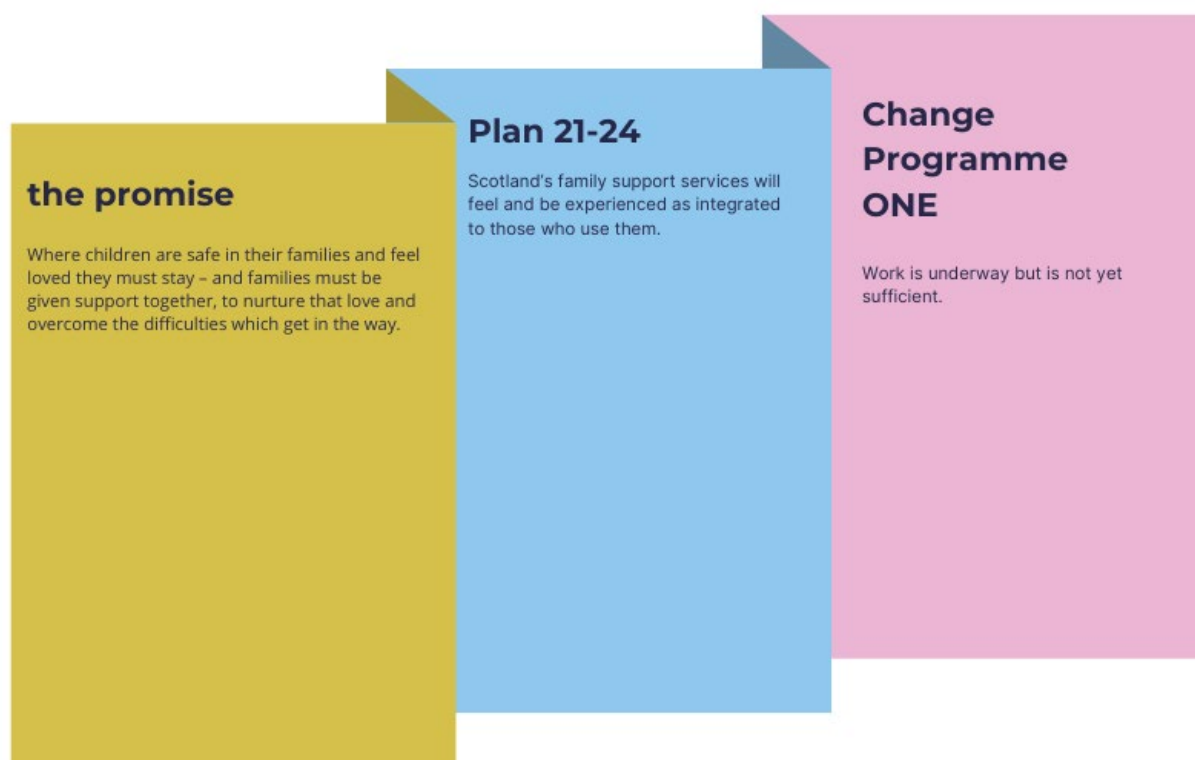
ENABLERS

There were multiple examples of 'single point of contact' type models being developed, aimed at enabling trusting relationships to be built and reduce the need for families to have multiple professionals in their lives all at once. Similarly, a recurring theme was the creation of hub-style services, based on the principle of providing local, 'no wrong door,' wrap-around support in the neighbourhoods where families live. These hubs or centres offered a range of practical and wellbeing-focused services all in one place, as well as more specialist services for families living with addiction or experiencing poverty. Community outreach workers continue to have a pivotal role to connect families into a range of health and social services, as well as closer partnership working between different agencies to improve referral processes and signposting.

There had been dedicated effort within some areas to better understand and map the availability of community-based services and gaps within community provision, including the development of 'Resource Directories' to raise awareness of and better understand and signpost to local provision.

Progress had been made to ensure that aspects of Local Authority planning such as Children's Services Plans and Corporate Parenting Plans are aligned with [the promise](#) and emphasise the whole family support lens in planning and delivery. However, it is unclear to what extent there is the same focus on alignment and inclusion of the promise in broader community planning and participation activities. The [Community Empowerment \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#), [the Planning \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#) and tools such as [The Place Standard Tool](#) present potential opportunities to ensure that the benefit of community assets such as leisure centres, green spaces, shops, and transport can be maximised, and that communities, children, young people, and families are at the heart of decisions that affect their lives.

Whole Family Support: Service integration



CONTEXT

There was limited information in the materials analysed that specifically addressed how or if the action to ensure family support services are experienced as integrated, is being implemented. However, there is significant overlap between this [Plan 21-24](#) action and other under the Whole Family Support priority area, in particular 'Whole Family Support' and 'Peer and Community Support'.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted interdependencies across the public sector and the need for system-wide approaches and cooperation across services, as well as the need a shared understanding of issues, risks, resources, and values.

The Scottish Government's proposals for a National Care Service (NCS), following the [Feeley review of Adult Social Care in Scotland](#) in 2021, will have significant impact on the delivery of social care and social work services in Scotland and will require large-scale service integration. Work is underway to research the possible implications of and to consult on inclusion of children and families and a decision is expected next year.

BARRIERS

There was acknowledgment from some organisations that this was an area that needed to be improved, as services did not always work effectively together, resulting in poor experiences of services for children and families.

Whilst some in some cases, the pandemic had acted as a catalyst for improved collaboration between support services and families, some cited the pandemic as having had a negative impact on inter-agency relationships, particularly between third and public sector organisations.

Local authorities highlighted the need to closely monitor and understand the potential impacts of the [National Care Service \(NCS\)](#) on service integration locally and how that will feel to families.

With the potential that children and families social care services will transfer to the NCS, local government is currently in a challenging holding position in relation to the improvement they know is required to #keepthepromise –decisions around investment for improvement are difficult in the context of services that will be transferred in the near future. There is also the wider aspect as Scottish Government's position is currently that the NCS is going ahead, and all adult social care services will transfer from local authorities to it – this is a significant change for local government regardless of the decision on the inclusion of children and families.

ENABLERS

Although NCS presents a barrier, there is also a level of agreement that it could be an opportunity for positive progress toward service integration if implemented in a way that upholds the promise, but much remains unclear as to what this would look like in practice.

Despite challenges, some local areas described positive steps toward ensuring families experience services as integrated, including: designing clearer pathways for children and families to access supports; locality-based, co-located multi-agency teams; pooling of partnership resources to provide more holistic supports; 'no wrong door' approaches; and outreach workers to connect and signpost families into services.

Whole Family Support: Family therapies



CONTEXT:

[Plan 21-24](#) does not provide a universal definition of family therapies and this may have impacted on the effort to understand progress being made.

Family therapies could account for a more traditional specialist systemic psychotherapeutic support. However, for many families support can be varied and adapted to suit their presenting needs; be needs-led and highly therapeutic. Look through a more 'traditional' family therapy lens risks missing or minimising incredibly therapeutic support that families are receiving. Furthermore, many interventions may not have primary focus of a family therapeutic approach, but a consequence and gain may be that a family feels supported and more able to reach their potential, i.e. income maximisation, violence reduction, speech and language support. Families often receive support that is not specialist or in a specialist or clinical environment but can be highly therapeutic and supportive, i.e. trauma informed responses from education staff, compassionate conversations and advice from early years staff, supportive and strengths-based support from social worker. This work can be difficult to define, capture or measure associated outcomes but for many families is a 'gamechanger.'

The [Early Intervention Framework](#) provides a database of evidence-based prevention and early intervention approaches designed to improve the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people. This resource provides opportunity to be

methodical and effective in both service commissioning and provision. Having taken care to listen to families and communities, a specific offer can be targeted to needs, circumstances and context. Interventions in this Early Intervention Framework may be one strand among a range of practical and emotional supports, in delivery of which there are cornerstones and common threads.

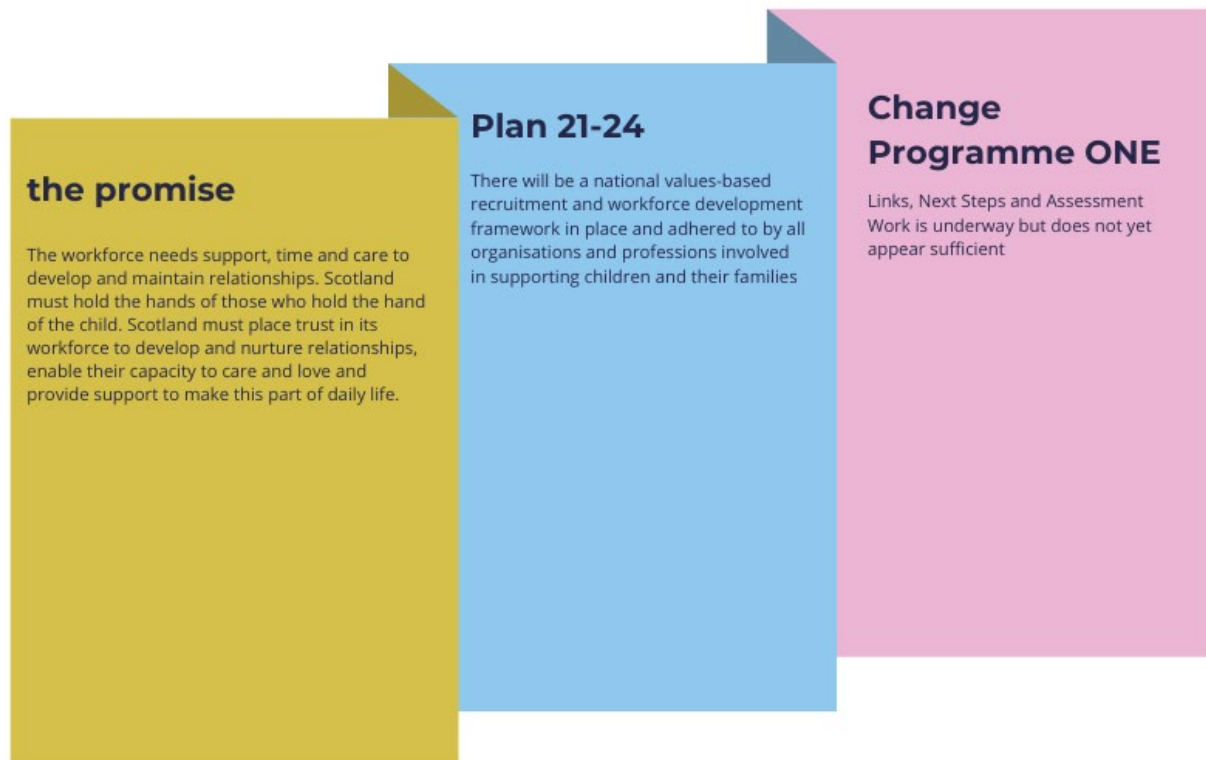
BARRIERS:

Family Support and the establishment of Family Group Decision Making approaches have supported early intervention. However, the lack of availability of intensive support, exacerbated in rural areas, has created inequality in provision and restricted access to support.

ENABLERS:

All local authorities are reporting that in response to [the promise](#) there has been consideration of how to better ensure services are informed by family's needs; and are design and delivered in an accessible manner. Work to improve the accessibility and suitability of support services will assist in achieving this action in part. Local areas and national government have demonstrated an ongoing commitment in supporting the workforce in becoming more trauma informed better improving the access to universal and targeted services.

Supporting the Workforce: Workforce values



CONTEXT

There was limited information surfaced on this topic in this round of analysis, however this is likely to be due to methodological limitations of this information source rather than reflecting a lack of activity in the sector.

The [Scottish Social Services Council \(SSSC\)](#) are leading a wholesale review of the social work and social care codes of practice and aiming to embed the promise in workforce standards and are engaging across the sector on this work. They have been commissioned by Scottish Government to review the [Common Core of Skills, Knowledge and Values Framework](#) for the children's social care workforce. The review will be launched by April 2024.

BARRIERS

[SSSC](#) only inspect in relation to social care workforce and therefore in relation to multi-agency partnerships they can only operate on a stakeholder basis, which they have identified as a potential current barrier that needs addressing. Additionally, whilst the codes of practice are important, they are a limited part of workforce support and standards and are influenced primarily by need for ongoing supervision. Overall action to attend to workforce capacity, recruitment and retention, pay and conditions are therefore likely to be more impactful than the codes of practice review.

Significant challenges were highlighted by local authorities around staff recruitment and retention (see 'Care Capacity' section above), as well as poor workforce well-being and morale in the wake of the pandemic.

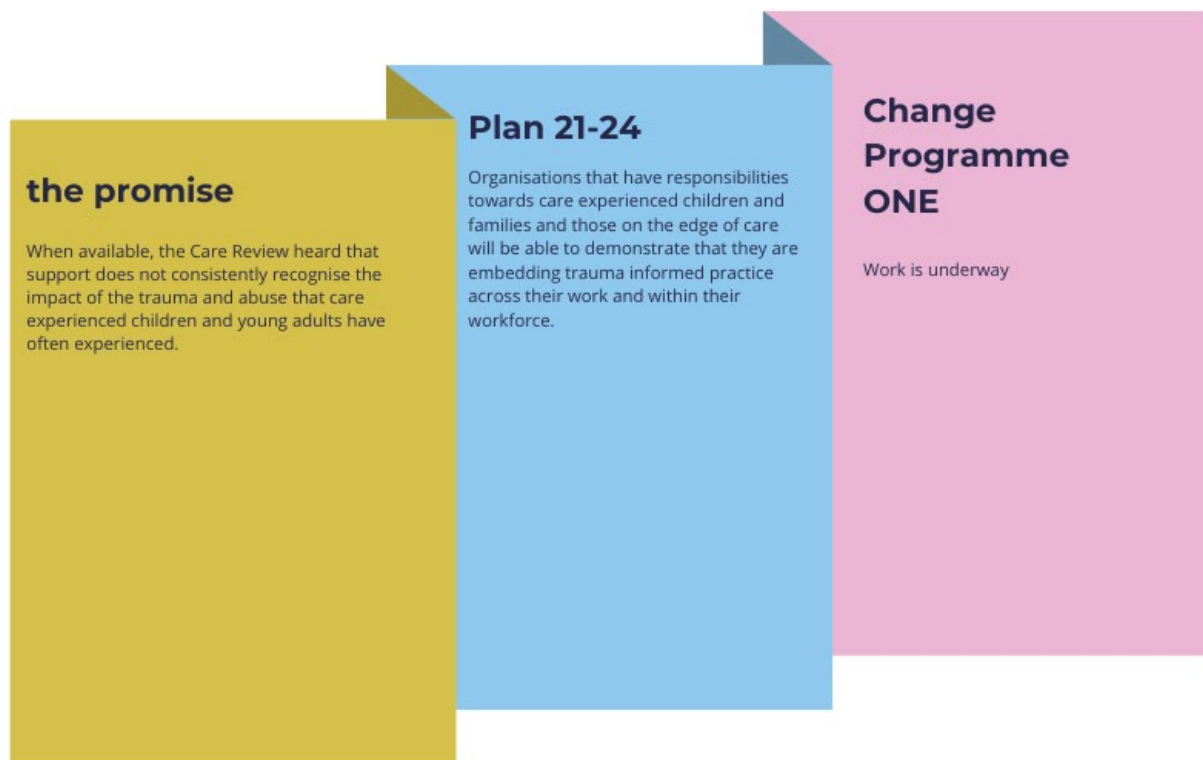
ENABLERS

There is commitment to mainstreaming the promise into workforce standards, training, and support.

There were references in the engagement materials to targeted staff development activities aimed at promoting shared values aligned to the promise, such as: multi-agency training and awareness-raising sessions; work to develop shared values and language in leadership, strategic and partnership spaces; the development of core competencies for staff as mentioned above; and including the voices of care experienced young people by including them in recruitment processes for staff who have responsibility for children, young people and their families.

DRAFT

Supporting the Workforce: Trauma informed



CONTEXT:

The intention to embed a 'trauma informed approach' across the supports and services accessed by care experienced children and young people, and their families is an increasingly visible commitment and appears to be more consistently understood as a responsibility across community domains beyond children's services; housing, policing etc.

The growing understanding around trauma informed practice is largely down to the well-resourced and highly coordinated national efforts by partners of the [National Trauma Training Programme](#).

While organisational messaging and understanding around this is growing, it is important to acknowledge that there is some way to go to ensuring this translates to impact for children and young people, and key to this is that we see a trauma-informed approach realised across all formal and local corporate parenting partnerships not only in a relational sense at practitioner level but in the overall environments they operate within. Further that we see more tangible examples of what it looks like for our workforce to be supported within trauma-informed workplaces that strengthen and enable individual and team approach amidst pressurised environments.

To date over £6m has been invested in the National Trauma Training Programme. This programme provides universally available trauma training resources and implementation support for the whole workforce, alongside more targeted support for priority sectors. Activity includes development of “Trauma Informed Approaches to Age of Criminal Responsibility Practice” training, The Barnhaus Standards Development Group, the National Child Protection Guidance Implementation Group, The Vision for Justice in Scotland, and the new Community Justice Strategy. A programme of implementation support for Scotland’s social work services is under development. To support this an Expert Advisory Group and Partnership Delivery Group has been established.

BARRIERS:

The weight of national effort has focused on staff training and on helping to raise awareness of trauma at both service and system level. On balance it is harder to get a clearer picture of how this learning is being more consistently incorporated by those within the workforce with scope to reflect on and approach the idea of a trauma informed approach in relation to the design of the overall service models they operate within; current processes and environments that care experienced children and young adults are required to navigate often remain at odds with an individual practitioners attempts to remain trauma informed within their individual relationships.

ENABLERS:

As part of the National Trauma Training Programme, in 2023 the Scottish Government, COSLA, NHS Education for Scotland, Resilience Learning Partnership and the Improvement Service will publish a Quality Improvement Framework to help any service/organisation in Scotland work towards becoming trauma informed. This resource speaks directly to the need to develop both a trauma informed culture and way of working for the workforce to not only provide support within but to be supported within.

Supporting the Workforce: Ongoing relationships



CONTEXT

There was very limited information surfaced on this topic in this round of analysis, however this is likely to be due to methodological limitations of this information source rather than reflecting a lack of activity in the sector.

The publication and cross-party endorsement of the promise provided organisations with 'permission' to prioritise and nurture relationships between children, young people and the people in the workforce who care for them.

As noted above, the [Scottish Social Services Council \(SSSC\)](#) are leading a wholesale review of the Common Core of Skills, Knowledge and Values Framework for the children's social care workforce, with a focus on upholding relationships and children's rights. The review will be launched by April 2024.

BARRIERS

Although anecdotally the publication of [the promise](#) has supported organisations to focus on workforce culture around ongoing relationships, it was also acknowledged that

this can be very challenging to demonstrate or evaluate. This is echoed in the data mapping and collection section below, in that organisations generally need to do more to enable them to record or report on information and data that relates to experiences and relationships.

As per the 'care capacity' section above, The Promise Scotland is hearing that children's services, particularly social workers, are being stretched far beyond their capacity and this continues to undermine the ability of workers to invest time in building and maintaining relationships.

ENABLERS

In spite of the challenges, there were multiple examples in the engagement material of work being undertaken with the explicit aim of supporting ongoing relationships. These included:

- Policy reviews to ensure no policies preclude ongoing relationships.
- Investing in and promoting flexible working to promote relationship-based practice.
- Ensuring children's plans capture action being taken to ensure children are supported to uphold relationships that are important to them.
- Training and support via approaches such as Life Long Links, and
- Accounts of staff who continued to offer practical and emotional support to young people who had moved on.

Supporting the Workforce: Workforce support



CONTEXT

As captured in the section above on Care Capacity, against a backdrop of successive years of UK Government imposed austerity, the COVID-19 pandemic and the current cost of living crisis, Scotland's workforce is currently overstretched and under-resourced. This has the potential to significantly undermine Scotland's commitment to #KeepThePromise, as success will depend largely on the capacity of the workforce to form trusted and meaningful relationships with the children and families they work with and to refocus energies away from the demands of 'the system' and onto what matters to children and families.

BARRIERS

The cost of living crisis is having a negative impact on the workforce, particularly on third-sector care providers who are facing increasing bills, shortages in staffing and increasing demand without uplifts to their funding.

A number of related issues and challenges were surfaced in relation to workforce support in some areas, including but not limited to: difficulties recruiting and retaining staff; workforce fatigue, low morale, and high levels of sickness, especially post

pandemic, 'Change fatigue' after successive waves of policy, practice, and implementation changes; infrastructural challenges such as lack of appropriate workspace and IT equipment.

It was noted in relation to this [Plan 21-24](#) action, that supervision takes place largely in social work contexts and does not reflect the culture and practice of all organisations involved in the lives of children and families across partnerships e.g. police, education, housing etc.

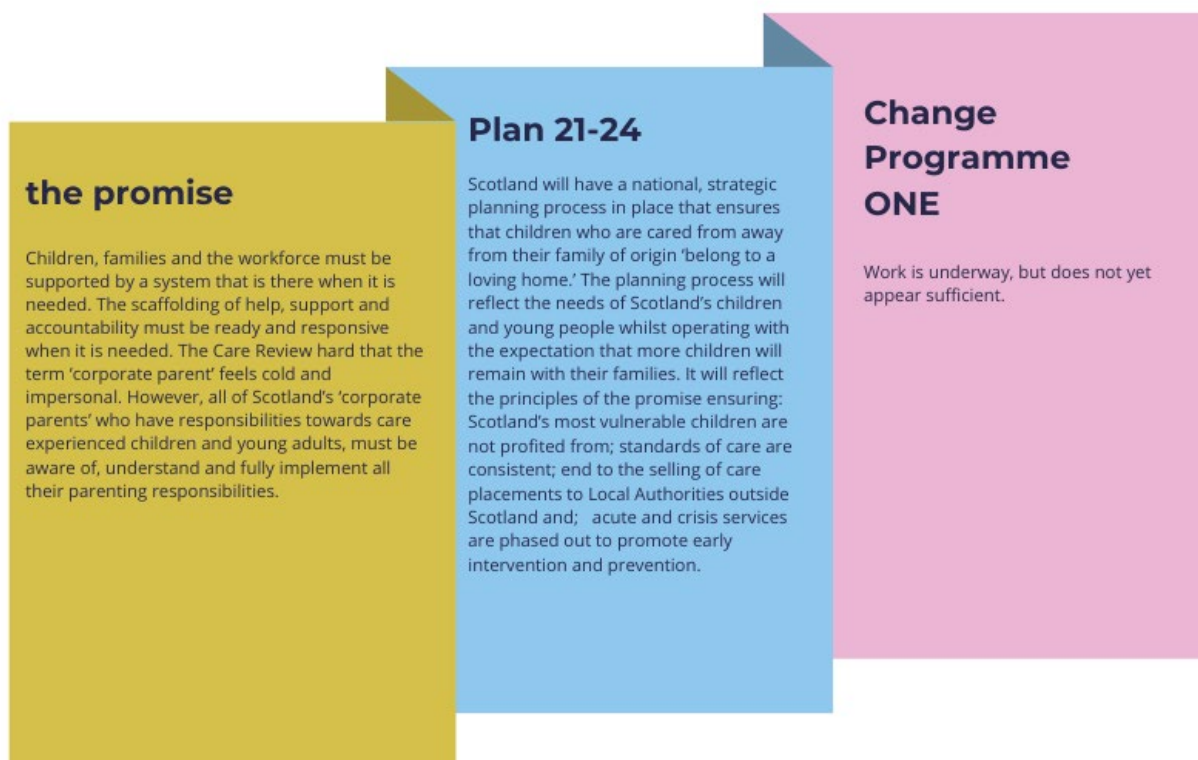
ENABLERS

Organisations report implementing changes to support the workforce, including:

- Staff training and development to increase and develop skills, knowledge, and confidence.
- Investing in software to better meet the operational needs of staff, relieving time pressure due to improved efficiency, and increasing the ability of staff to work flexibly.
- Raising awareness of ways to support the workforce including support services available to staff, e.g. mental health support, services aimed at alleviating poverty for workers in the third and public sectors.
- One example of project to develop and implement a co-designed 'nurture policy' for staff.²

² <http://relationshipsfirst.net/1437-2/hug-in-mug>

Planning: Planning



CONTEXT:

It is clear that the number of new foster carers is continuing to fall, while the number of new foster care households failed to meet the numbers of incoming children in 29 of the 32 local authorities. The majority of fostering service providers (63%) have experienced a net loss in foster care households (i.e. more de-registering than new foster carers).

A recent study found that the intersection of increased complexity of cases, a growing administrative burden, and an increasingly complex policy landscape, combined with a social work workforce which has not increased in size, has led to social workers who have, 'larger, more administratively demanding and less balanced caseloads comprising individuals with more challenging lives, often presenting higher levels of risk.'

BARRIERS:

Regarding cross-border 'placements', [The Children and Young People's Commissioner for Scotland \(CYPCS\)](#) raised concerns about children being "deprived of their liberty" or being "placed in unregistered and unregulated children's homes without the knowledge of local services such as health and education". There was further concern that: "As Scotland has a separate legal system, these children do not receive the same legal

protection as children residing in Scotland. CYPCS do not believe the current regulatory 'fix' for these placements adequately protects the rights of these children and, it allows placements to become long-term rather than temporary".³

COSLA and Scottish Government have not reached agreement on the funding of foster and kinship allowances. Whilst fixing foster allowances will not solve all issues around having the right homes for children at the right time, it represents a significant barrier.

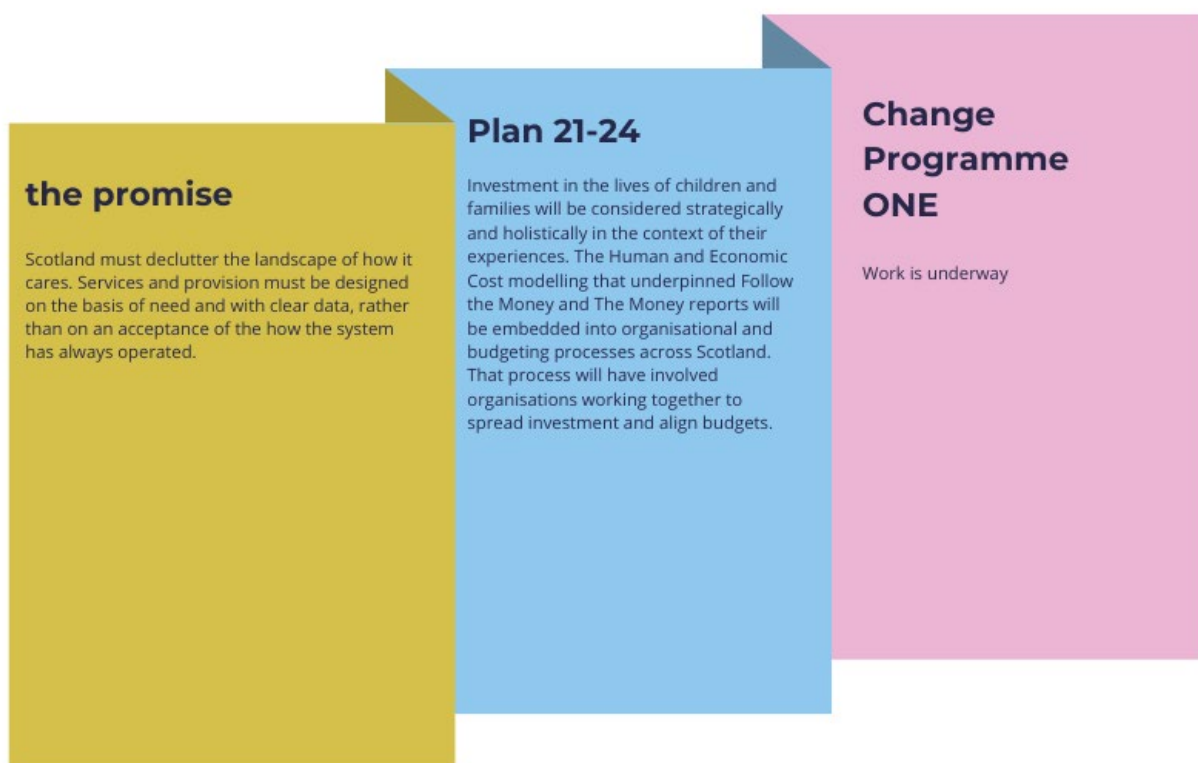
ENABLERS:

Organisations that did reference planning highlighted work they were doing to ensure more children remain both within their families, but also to reduce and remove the need for children to live outside of the local authority area and ensure children stay near their families, schools and communities. This included efforts to:

- Increase preventative and holistic support to families through intensive support in the home, or 'hub' or 'one stop shop' type models.
- Create additional capacity in the local area, shifting expenditure on out of area placements to the creation of new local services (some challenges were noted in respect of registering new services with the Care Inspectorate).
- Drives to recruit more local foster carers and to provide 'step up, step down' supports to families and foster families to minimise risk of young person being accommodated away from home.
- Streamlining processes to single assessments and plans shared across partners to improve joined up planning.
- Better incorporating voices of children and families in planning through services such as Family Group Decision Making, aimed at helping a child's wider family to come together to agree on a family plan to support that child, before a life-changing decision is made about their future.
- Increasing use of data to support planning around family needs and early intervention.

³ 'Report of the Children's Commissioners of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child: Examination of the Combined Sixth and Seventh Periodic Reports of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland' (Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland (CYPCS), November 2022), <https://www.cypcs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/CRC-Report-November-2022-Online.pdf>.

Planning: Investment



CONTEXT:

Of the references that were made to investment, while many reports name specific and quantifiable investment across various promise-related priorities, it is unclear at this stage whether that investment has been considered holistically around families or whether thinking and budgets have been aligned, or whether principles of Human and Economic Cost Modelling (HECM) have been explored or embedded.

The [Scottish Government's Equality and Fairer Scotland Budget Statement 2022-23](#) incorporates elements of a [Children's Rights Impact Assessment](#). It remains less clear, however, that budget decisions by public authorities are informed by consideration of children's human rights. For instance, the closure of libraries and recreation facilities negatively affect children's rights.

BARRIERS:

On a national basis, despite devolved welfare powers and the creation of new child and adult disability benefits, key benefits such as Universal Credit have not been devolved.

Local areas report that they do not experience funding streams made available to them as always being aligned around families, resulting (at times) in disparate, short-term sources of funding; resource intensive reporting requirements; and a lack of cohesion. This lack of cohesion is not solely around investment explicitly identified as towards 'keeping the promise' but additionally investment that delivers upon the holistic ambitions of the promise.

ENABLERS:

Despite challenges, some local areas have been able to report local innovation towards investment such as: pooling of funds to create family support hubs; piloting of participatory budgeting and more broadly involving those with lived experience in funding decisions; and mapping existing funds to inform how funds may be shifted towards early intervention and prevention.

New child and adult disability benefits have now been introduced under devolved welfare powers, however at present eligibility criteria and payments remain the same as under previous UK benefits. The phased introduction of a new [Scottish Child Payment \(SCP\)](#) has begun, but there is a need to ensure that all eligible families receive the benefit and that payments are increased in line with inflation.

WHOLE FAMILY WELLBEING FUND:



CONTEXT:

The initial £50m investment across 3 elements has been distributed as follows:

- £32m to all Children's Services Partnerships with the aim of scaling up and driving the delivery of local whole family support services.
- £6m to drive whole system change in whole family support across East Ayrshire, East Lothian and Glasgow City Councils.
- £12m to be allocated to projects that support long-term policy change: none has been formally allocated to date.

Whilst the national budget environment is challenging, the commitment to Whole Family Wellbeing Funding (WFWF) remains. The 2023-24 budget has identified circa £80m to be invested in Promise related activities, including £50m Whole Family Wellbeing Funding. The remaining circa £30m includes investment in Fostering, Secure Care and Children's Hearing redesign.

Activity is underway with local partnerships across Scotland to deliver WFWF including establishing Collaborative Partnerships with the 3 CSPPs, locality teams to develop stronger understanding of context and support creation of locality specific plans: Implementation a Learning Into Action network: and ongoing research and evaluation to support implementation of change.

BARRIERS:

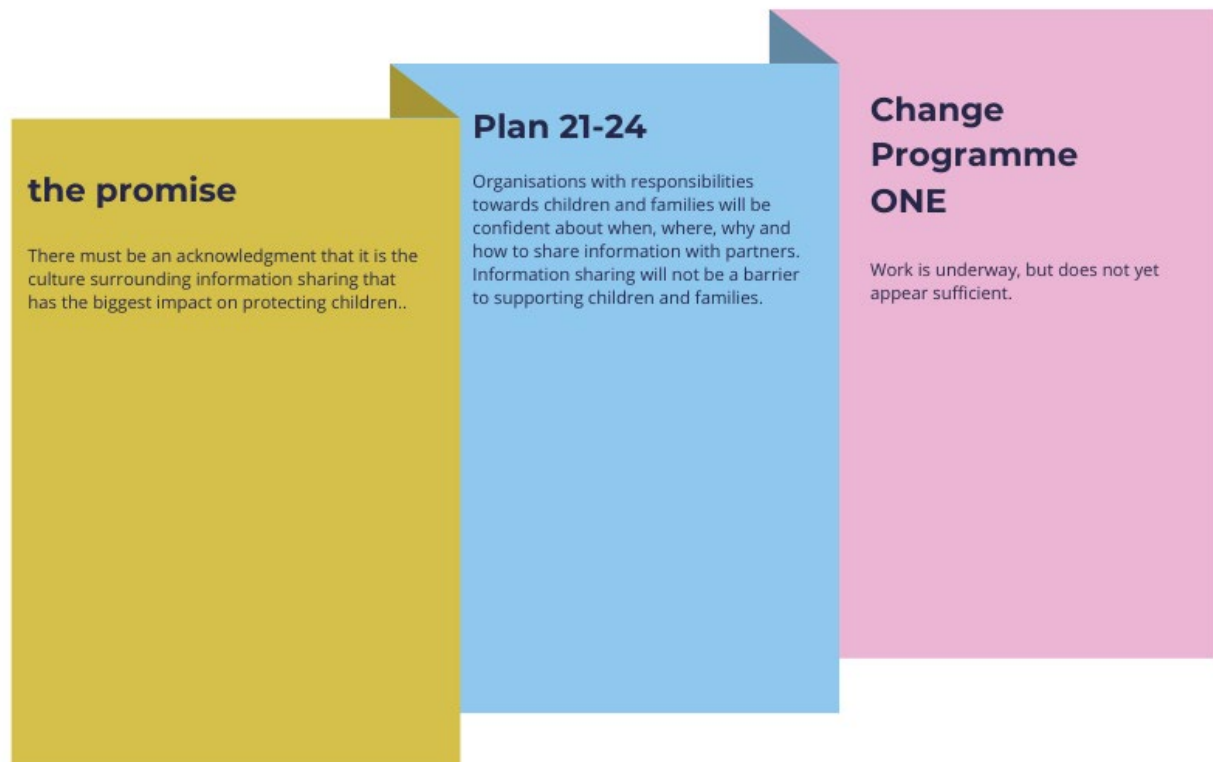
The totality of the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund has not been identified within Government budgets, nor is there a plan to get to 5% of health and social care spend being focused on family support.

ENABLERS:

The Promise Scotland understands the political commitment to the fund remains high and it has been protected in relation to other funding pots. There is a ministerial committee that meets to oversee the fund.

DRAFT

Planning: Information sharing



CONTEXT:

Stakeholders across Scotland recognise that information sharing presents real opportunities towards keeping the promise.

On a national basis, the development of Scotland's first [Data Strategy for Health and Social Care](#) is underway. The Data Strategy aims to empower the use of quality data to drive high quality service delivery, bringing services together and improving the experience of the individual and their treatment.

BARRIERS:

Some organisations continue to highlight that information sharing remains an area for improvement and that further work is required to achieve swift and appropriate sharing.

Some organisations recognise that information sharing around data sets continues to represent a barrier to progress. This was described as challenges around a lack of and capability to use local level data in order to understand and develop responses to local complexity; and also, the effective sharing of data across local and national bodies.

ENABLERS:

Where information sharing is identified as a strength, key drivers of success have been reported as strong leadership, close partnership working and the implementation of guidance such as the [GIRFEC](#) practice model. Enabling systems such as software when implemented was reported to facilitate information sharing across partners and achieving the outcome of providing a clearer picture of children and families' needs.

There is an appetite amongst stakeholders to use information sharing as a driver for change across multiple areas: for instance, or having access to a wider range of data and intelligence could be used to tackle child poverty more effectively.

DRAFT

Building Capacity: Legislation



CONTEXT:

The Promise Bill is due to be brought before Parliament this parliamentary term. In the meantime, the Government has brought forward the Children's Care and Justice Bill. There is still no timeline on when the amended UNCRC Bill will be brought back to Parliament following discussion with the UK Government.

BARRIERS:

There is not yet an identifiable bill team within Scottish Government preparing for what needs to be included. However, once the Hearing Systems Working Group reports in April, that will provide some of the bedrock for the development of the bill.

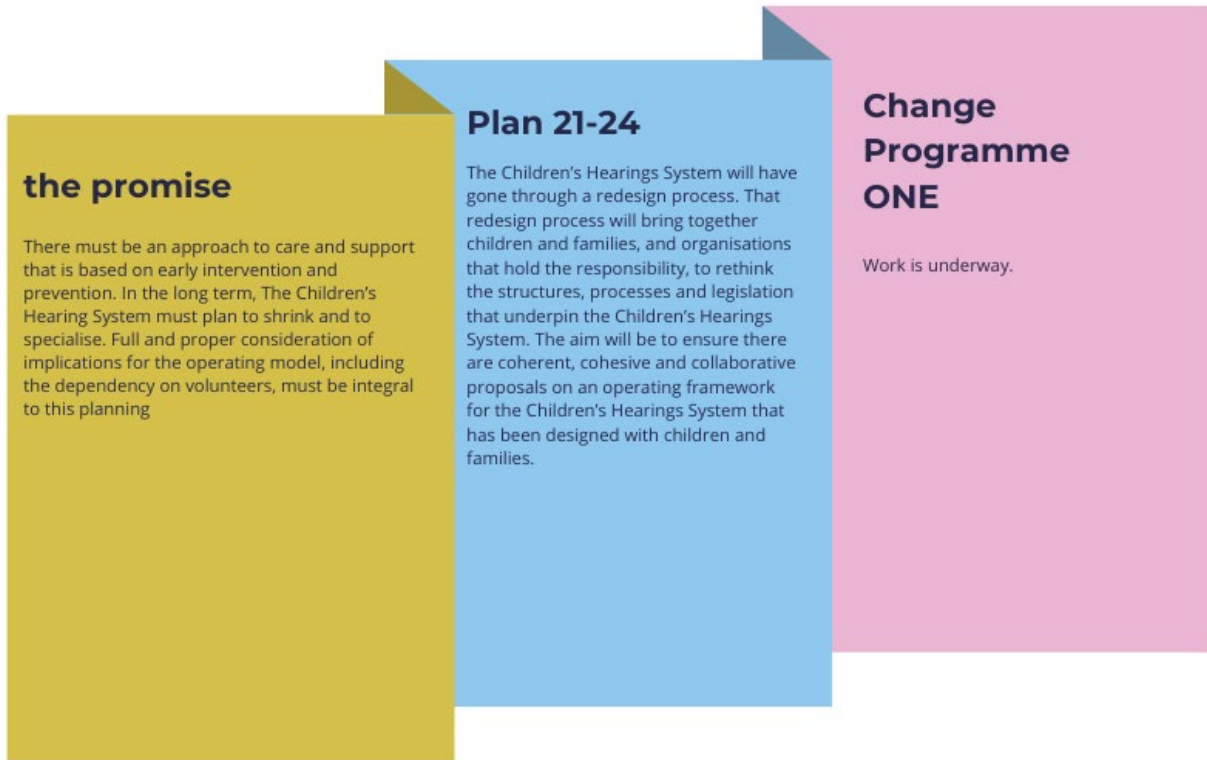
The decision around the National Care Service will impact on the shape of the Promise Bill as all the legislative duties currently sit with implementing authorities. It will be difficult to make progress, whilst that decision is pending.

ENABLERS:

The prospective Promise Bill allows an opportunity to create a streamlined legislative framework, that includes the work of the HSWG.

DRAFT

- Building Capacity: Children's hearing system



CONTEXT:

The Hearings System Working Group is currently entering a phase of deliberations which will result in a first draft of recommendations about the redesign. The draft recommendations will be shared with organisations and professionals, volunteers and children and families with experience of the Hearings System and finalised before sending to the Scottish Government in April 2023. There is broad agreement that the redesign must be transformational, but the original principles set out by the [Kilbrandon Committee](#) should remain.

Alongside the work of the Hearings System Working Group organisations such as the [Scottish Children's Reporter Administration](#) and [Children's Hearings Scotland](#) have worked alongside [Our Hearings Our Voice](#), the VIP Project and others to consider ways to make more urgent and practical improvements to children and families' experiences of their Hearings.

In April 2023 the next stage of the redesign process will hand substantively over to the Scottish Government, who will work to consider the recommendations of the Hearings System Working Group. It will be important to ensure that there is significant resource committed so that the issues identified by children and families set out in The Promise can be addressed.

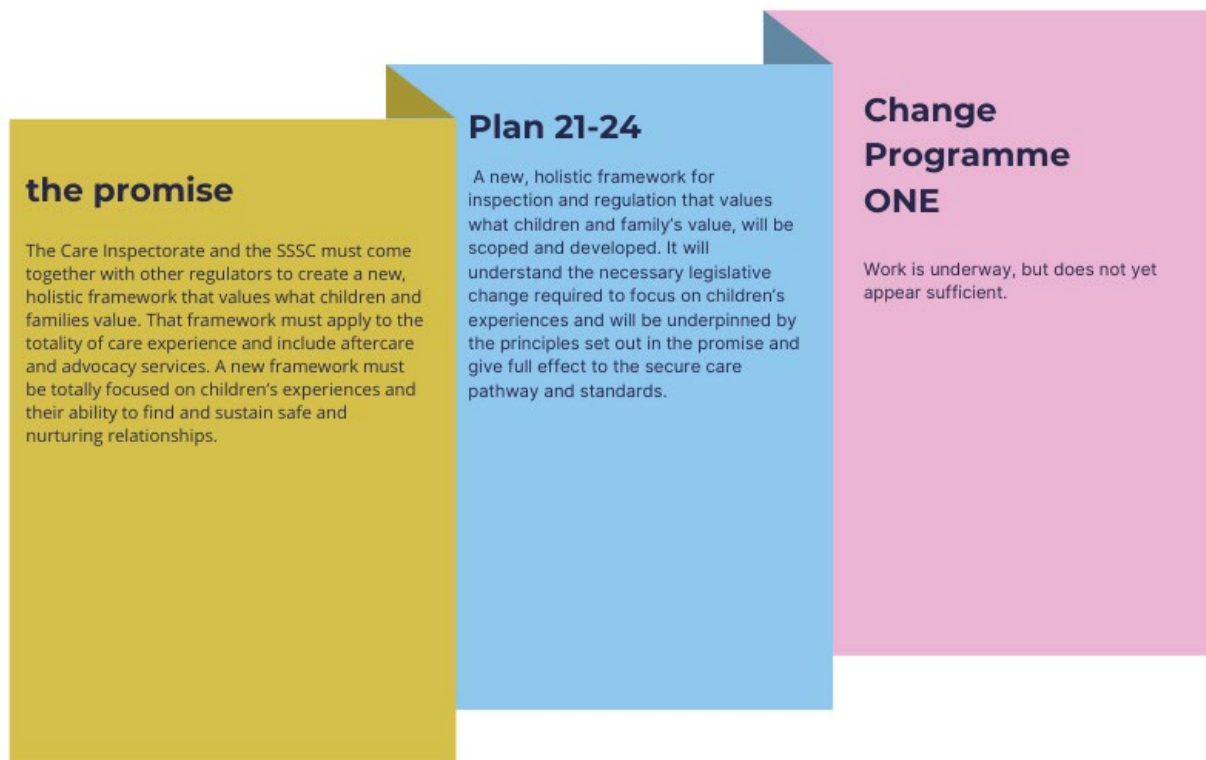
The promise called for changes to the Children’s Hearings System to be tested—much of this will require significant resources to evaluate change and to pilot new approaches. At the same time, the Promise Bill will be being developed. The Promise Scotland will need to consider how to translate the work of the Hearings System Working Group and the response from the Scottish Government into a coherent legislative framework, and fully resourcing any changes.

ENABLERS:

There is clear cohesion at present between the intention set out in the promise and the work of those involved in redesigning the Children’s Hearings. However, it will be important to ensure that the level of commitment is maintained in the next stage in terms of considering the recommendations and translating redesign from words on a page to practical changes in children and families’ lives.

DRAFT

Building Capacity: Inspection and regulation



CONTEXT:

An [Independent Review of Inspection, Scrutiny and Regulation \(IRISR\)](#), chaired by Dame Sue Bruce, will report in June 2023 with recommendations related to the National Care Service.

The Care Inspectorate are working with scrutiny partners, including SSSC, and national stakeholders to develop policy and practice that will deliver the promise. Six clear workstreams with timebound outputs form the programme of work.

BARRIERS:

The uncertainty surrounding the National Care Service is not impeding the Care Inspectorate's work on keeping the promise. However, both [Professor Ken Muir's report on education form](#) and the ongoing IRISR are likely to have significant implications for inspection and regulation services that relate to children and young people.

ENABLERS:

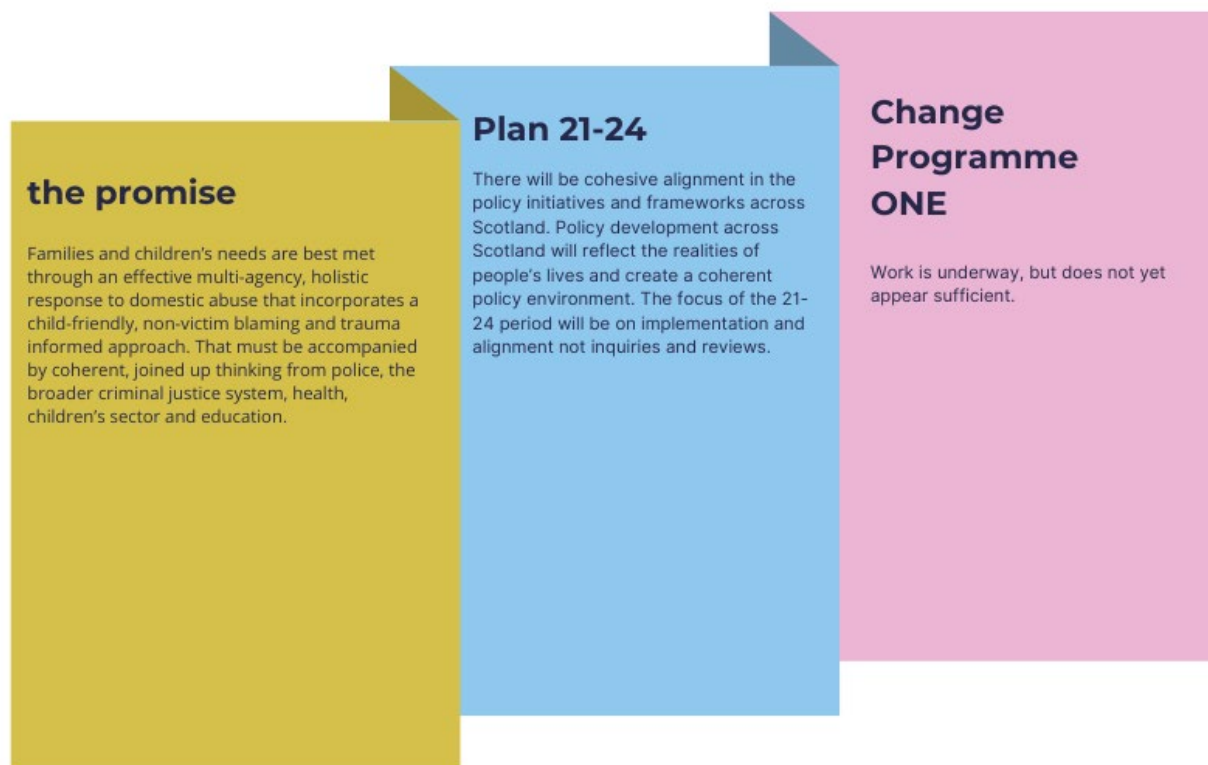
There is considerable thinking around putting children's experiences at the heart of inspection and improvement. The Care Inspectorate are advocating a joined up strategic approach with other partners and focussing on the outcomes for those experiencing care.

The IRISR will make recommendations as to how inspection, scrutiny and regulation of social care, and linked services have a basis in human rights and trauma informed practice and are inclusive of people with lived and living experience.

It will also consider how any new arrangements will meet the needs of and interface with services that are not part of the National Care Service. This should include education services, for example.

DRAFT

Building Capacity: Policy coherence



CONTEXT:

[GIRFEC](#) remains the cornerstone of the approach to children and families and was refreshed in September 2022. However, the policy context in Scotland around the lives of children and families remains complex. Funding pots continue to be focused on 'issues' rather than families, leading to siloed policy and funding. As cited about this makes it complex for those with delivery responsibility to align services and supports.

The decision around the National Care Service has dominated the conversation and work around streamlining and coherence.

BARRIERS:

There is some evidence in the engagement documents that this [Plan 21-24](#) action may require further definition, expanding on what the Independent Care Review heard about policy coherence, and what sorts of activity might demonstrate progress in this area, in order to support a clear understanding of what the issues are and what 'good' looks like.

Engagement with stakeholders has highlighted that the cluttered policy context is challenging, and that work is needed on a national level to address this.

ENABLERS:

Where information about policy coherence has been referenced, it has been described in terms of: work to ensure different organisations work in partnership structures under the same policies; and/or work to ensure policies themselves are aligned with other key policies.

Information captured mentions work intended to align plans and policies with one another, particularly the promise, UNCRC and GIRFEC, although the National Performance Framework, Carer's Act, Children and Young People Scotland Act, Community Empowerment Act and local Child Poverty Action plans are also mentioned.

DRAFT

- Building Capacity: Data mapping and collection



CONTEXT

The Independent Care Review heard that the data landscape in Scotland is 'fundamentally flawed as it does not reflect what matters to children'. It found:

- A lack of data on the human experience of moving through the system and its impacts.
- Narrow data definitions of the 'subject' of the 'care system', leading to disconnected data pictures.
- Lack of effective use of technologies and disconnects across the data landscape.
- Heavy emphasis on 'outcomes' at the expense of an understanding of 'process' and 'journeys'.
- Lack of a cohesive central picture of *all* data on the processes and systems that directly and indirectly impact on children and their families, including but not limited to data on housing, poverty, education, employment, social work, health etc.

There are many data initiatives taking place across Scotland to improve the public sector data landscape and infrastructure. However more work is required to identify and develop meaningful ways to understand the experiences of children, young people and families, to ensure that lived experience and voice are a core influence on decision-making, strategy, funding, planning and practice.

BARRIERS

In addition to the broader barriers highlighted by the Independent Care Review, there were a significant number of challenges and barriers identified through engagement, including:

- Gaps in data meaning Scotland cannot currently understand the complete picture that is required to #keepthepromise.
- Overreporting, and not always on the right things, leaving a lack of resources for local analysis.
- Lack of understanding around what success, or 'good' looks like.
- Practical difficulties involved in ensuring collaboration across different organisations, IT systems and different parts of the workforce
- High costs of making any changes to forms or data collection tools.
- Reporting structures that require organisations to respond to multiple, individual requests for data, often 'slicing' the data in slightly different ways to meet the various reporting bodies' needs.

ENABLERS

The Scottish Government is developing the first [Data Strategy for Health and Social Care](#) in Scotland. It aims to 'empower the use of quality data to drive high-quality service delivery, bringing services together and improving the experience of the individual and their treatment' and will be published in early 2023.

[Improvement Service](#) carried out a mapping exercise to understand what measures could be used from within existing data sources to monitor progress against [Plan 21-24](#). The exercise provided evidence that there are some positive trends at a national level, however, it also demonstrated that there are gaps in the existing data, but also that quantitative data cannot be relied upon alone to understand progress and needs to be supplemented with ways of capturing experiences and stories.

The [Children's Health in Care in Scotland](#) project is the first population-wide longitudinal data analysis in the UK that links administrative data to enable comparison of the health of children with care experience with the general population. It underscores the importance and potential of linked data, but also the continued difficulties presented by how data is collected, stored and information sharing systems and processes.

Work is ongoing as part of the wider '[Digital Strategy for Scotland](#)' to embed a set of [data standards](#) that will enable better integration and linkage of data, as well as simpler access and work around ensuring open data for transparency and research. Additionally, initiatives such as the [Data Loch](#) and Research Data Scotland's 'Data Access

Service' are aimed at improving and simplifying access to data, and provide potential opportunities for learning and collaboration.

A Scottish Centre for Administrative Data Research [pilot project](#), delivered by Children in Scotland explored young people's views about their data, and what it means to take a children's rights-based approach to data, to inform future data and evidence work.

Some local areas have been carrying out their own extensive data mapping and collection activity in order to support service redesign activities aimed at keeping the promise and to identify gaps in the data, areas for improvement including identifying areas of overlap and difference in services and policies to prevent duplication and maximise use of resources.

Further improvement activities mentioned in engagement materials include:

- Activity aimed at better incorporating the voices and experiences of children and young people.
- The automation of some data collection to free up staff capacity.
- Development of bespoke software to enable better capture of qualitative data currently held in case files.

DOING DATA DIFFERENTLY AND THE PROMISE DATA MAP

[The Promise Data Map](#) is an ongoing project to create a database that holds descriptive information on what data is currently collected in Scotland. It aims to facilitate a cohesive central picture of *all* data on the processes and systems that directly and indirectly impact on children and their families.

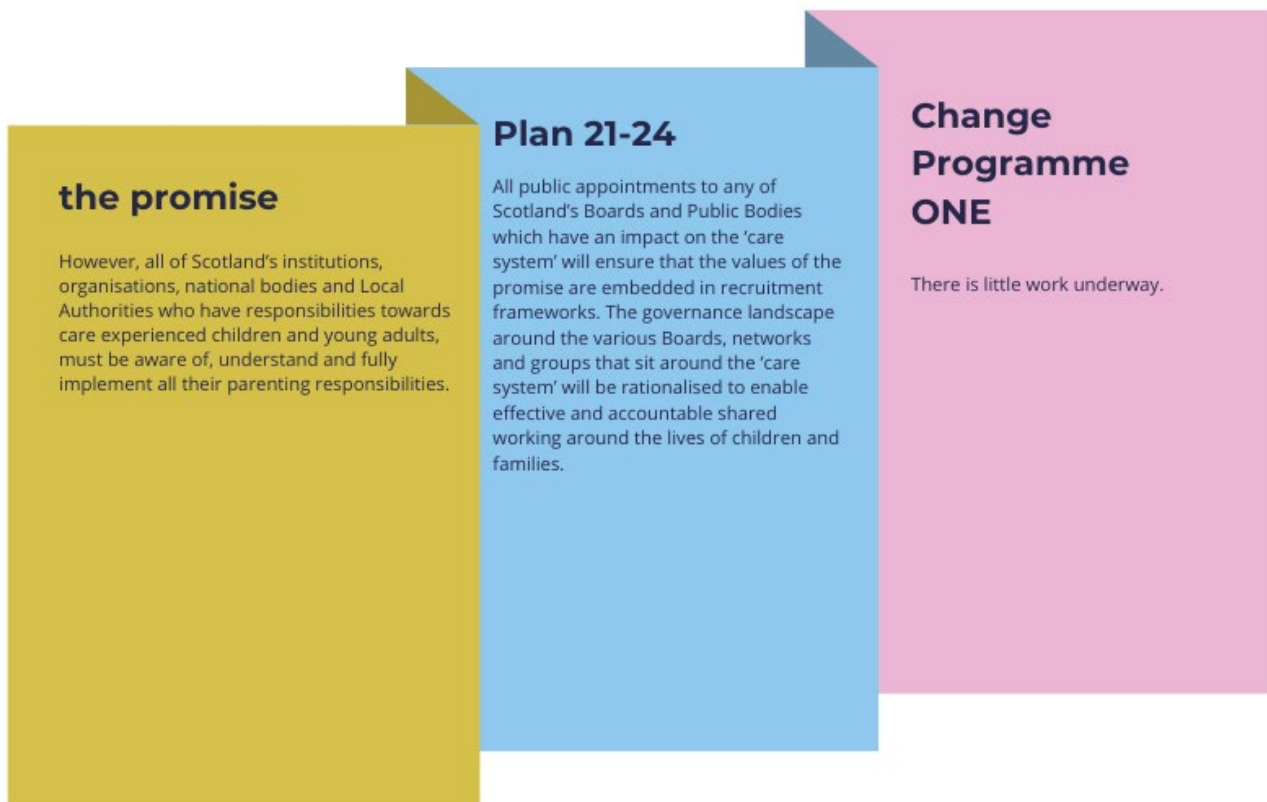
Phase one of the data map ended in summer 2022, facilitated by the [Data for Children Collaborative](#). This phase of the project was focused on understanding what kinds of data Scotland collects and the best method to map it. Phase two of the project took forward the recommendations of phase one and focused on building the software for the promise data map, ensuring it is designed to:

- Be sustainable and useful in the long-term, by ensuring the map can be updated
- Be of immediate use to individual organisations using the tool- the volume of data the promise data map intends to capture, means it will never be 'complete', therefore the project must not create a bottleneck by waiting until it is 'complete'- it needs to be useful to organisations in improving data both now and in the future.
- Minimise additional administrative burden and ensure user-friendliness for organisations contributing to the data map.
- Be capable of enabling the user to visualise and explore the data in different ways that make it navigable and meaningful.
- Be capable of adapting to future findings as the project grows and of adding additional tools and features in response to user feedback.

This phase concluded in February 2023 and means that the data map is now 'live' and capable of data collection on a larger scale. There will be a further phase of targeted data collection, to ensure there is enough data within the tool to a) develop the 'front end' features that make the tool easy to navigate and explore and b) to avoid duplication of effort by asking organisations to contribute data that is already reported or available publicly. The aim is that the tool will be ready for roll out across Scotland by the end of the [Plan 21-24](#) timeframe, in March 2024.

Related and interlinked with the Promise Data Map are the 'What Matters Questions.' These were developed by translating the evidence heard from the Care Review into a series of questions, which are linked to the [Plan 21-24](#) actions and written primarily from the point of view of a child or young person. They provide a framework for helping organisations to understand the extent to which their existing data can help them to understand what matters to children and families, or if there are gaps or new ways of working required. Work is ongoing, although The Promise Scotland is beginning to collaborate with others, including Local Authorities and the Scottish Government, in testing out these questions as a tool to keep data systems rooted in what children and families have said matter to them.

Building Capacity: Governance structures



CONTEXT:

Organisations recognise the important role played by governance in ensuring effective and accountable shared working. However, there is very little work taking place on the rationalising the national governance landscape, exacerbated by the ongoing uncertainty about the scope of the National Care Service.

At the same time, there is considerable thinking around the country on the role of governance in effective and accountable shared working in local areas.

BARRIERS:

There is a lack of clarity on the actions required by [Plan 21-24](#). Terminology is used interchangeably, with little analysis of the links between governance, accountability, assurance, scrutiny, improvement, inspection, and regulation. Rationalising the national governance landscape will affect many public services and will ultimately need to be driven by Government.

The cluttered landscape at national and local level is itself a barrier to change. Individual organisational priorities and strategies still take precedence over collective working in pursuit of shared priorities.

ENABLERS:

There is thinking at local level about effective and accountable shared working including governance arrangements – for example, how to strengthen buy-in across partnership governance structures; the responsibilities of different local boards and groups; and changes to structures and membership.

The National Care Service could provide the driver for rationalisation at national level, if new approaches to governance are factored into plans from the start. There is the opportunity to build on the work of the [Public Sector Reform Unit](#) and work on

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Plan 21-24 Mid-point update

February 2023

Appendix

Paper 2/2



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Appendix

Early Death

Desktop Analysis

As “Early Death” was a Report ONE thematic, and not a Plan 21-24 action, it was considered separately for analysis. Seven documents were consulted as a part of this process; information about current activity drew heavily from Scottish Government (namely, the National Hub for Reviewing and Learning from the Deaths of Children and Young People), while information about gaps and recommendations came primarily from CELCIS. As such, material for this section came from a limited set of sources and is not comprehensive.

Pre-2022

There continues to be a national commitment to review deaths of care experienced young people, up the age of 26, with the intent that, “by reviewing and learning from these deaths, we may reduce the chances of future deaths”.¹ The Scottish Government’s National Hub (created 2019 and co-hosted by Healthcare Improvement Scotland and the Care Inspectorate) is active and working specifically on child death reviews. In October 2021, the Hub created a “national system to support reviewing and learning... with an aim to coordinate all current review activity”.²³

2022 Updates

Scottish Government has also published a Suicide Prevention Strategy for 2022-2023.⁴ The Strategy is intended “to reduce the number of suicide deaths in Scotland, whilst tackling the inequalities which contribute to suicide” through partnership working.⁵ It is supported by Scottish Government and COSLA, who have joint responsibility for delivery.⁶ However, care experience is not directly discussed in the strategy, nor in Public Health Scotland’s report on the strategy.⁷

The strategy includes these planned actions: creation of a Delivery Collective, to organise a joined-up approach;⁸ refinements to the National Suicide Prevention Leadership Group (NSPLG), including a

¹ ‘When a Child Dies: Learning from the Experiences of Bereaved Families and Carers’ (Healthcare Improvement Scotland; Care Inspectorate: National Hub for Reviewing and Learning from the Deaths of Children and Young People, June 2022), 5, 8, https://www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org/our_work/governance_and_assurance/deaths_of_children_reviews/families_and_carer_report.aspx.

² ‘Learning from the Experiences of Bereaved Families and Carers’, 5; ‘National Hub for Reviewing and Learning from the Deaths of Children and Young People’, Healthcare Improvement Scotland, accessed 8 December 2022, https://www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org/our_work/governance_and_assurance/deaths_of_children_reviews.aspx.

³ ‘National Hub for Reviewing and Learning from the Deaths of Children and Young People’.

⁴ ‘Creating Hope Together: Scotland’s Suicide Prevention Strategy 2022-2032’ (COSLA: Scottish Government, 29 September 2022), <https://www.gov.scot/publications/creating-hope-together-scotlands-suicide-prevention-strategy-2022-2032/>.

⁵ ‘Scotland’s Suicide Prevention Strategy 2022-2032’, 6.

⁶ ‘Scotland’s Suicide Prevention Strategy 2022-2032’, 18.

⁷ ‘Suicide among Young People in Scotland: A Report from the Scottish Suicide Information Database, An Official Statistics Release for Scotland’ (Public Health Scotland, 6 September 2022).

⁸ ‘Scotland’s Suicide Prevention Strategy 2022-2032’, 27.

dual focus on lived experience and academic research;⁹ links to local leadership and Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs);¹⁰ doubling funding for suicide prevention;¹¹ and incorporating suicide prevention in all mental health policy and programmes.¹²

June 2022 saw the publication of a report from The National Hub on a survey of bereaved families conducted in late 2021.¹³ The survey had 39 completed responses (under half of initial respondents completed).¹⁴ The Hub also created guidance that: “sets out good practice processes when reviewing the death of a child or young person. It also looks at how to keep families and carers are meaningfully involved in, and informed about, all parts of the review process, including bereavement support”.¹⁵

Current status (statistics, gaps, and recommendations)

Statistics of child deaths in Scotland:

- “Scotland has one of the highest rates of child deaths in Western Europe and 1 in 4 of those deaths are potentially avoidable, amounting to 75 lives every year”¹⁶
- “A quarter (25.7%) of all deaths among 5-24-year-olds were probable suicides. This compares to 1.2% of all deaths among those aged 25 and over”.¹⁷
 - “There were significant differences in the proportion of all deaths attributed to probable suicide in 2011 to 2020 between the 5-year age subgroups composing the 5-24 group. The proportion increased with age: 10.6% of deaths were attributed to suicide among 10-14-year-olds, 26.4% among 15-19-year-olds, and 31.1% among 20-24-year-olds”.¹⁸

“CELCIS’s Response to the Scottish Government’s Consultation on ‘A New Suicide Prevention Strategy for Scotland’” discusses current understandings of links between care-experience and suicide risk and highlights perceived gaps in Scotland. The response suggests that current evidence and understanding of the factors associated with suicide risk is limited by how Scotland records data, and this extend to a limited understanding of the relationship between care-experience and suicide. However, that other research shows that care-experienced adults are likely to have premature mortality and a higher-than-average suicide rate, and that this heightened risk of suicide extends in later life, beyond the initial transition from care as a young adult.¹⁹ This risk is thought to be even higher for people with experience of residential care or secure care.²⁰

⁹ ‘Scotland’s Suicide Prevention Strategy 2022-2032’, 28.

¹⁰ ‘Scotland’s Suicide Prevention Strategy 2022-2032’, 28.

¹¹ ‘Scotland’s Suicide Prevention Strategy 2022-2032’, 30.

¹² ‘Scotland’s Suicide Prevention Strategy 2022-2032’, 31.

¹³ ‘Learning from the Experiences of Bereaved Families and Carers’, 5.

¹⁴ ‘Learning from the Experiences of Bereaved Families and Carers’, 10.

¹⁵ ‘Learning from the Experiences of Bereaved Families and Carers’, 8.

¹⁶ ‘Learning from the Experiences of Bereaved Families and Carers’, 4.

¹⁷ ‘Suicide among Young People in Scotland: A Report from the Scottish Suicide Information Database, An Official Statistics Release for Scotland’, 9.

¹⁸ ‘Suicide among Young People in Scotland: A Report from the Scottish Suicide Information Database, An Official Statistics Release for Scotland’, 10.

¹⁹ Kate Mackinnon, ‘CELCIS’s Response to the Scottish Government’s Consultation on “A New Suicide Prevention Strategy for Scotland”’ (CELCIS, 2022), 2–3, <https://www.celcis.org/knowledge-bank/search-bank/celcis-response-scottish-governments-consultation-new-suicide-prevention-strategy-scotland>.

²⁰ Mackinnon, 3.

The response also identifies current gaps in three areas: (1) the evidence of provision of mental health support for children and adults;²¹ (2) Scotland’s understanding of ‘moving on’ and the experience of transitioning from care, as data on care-experienced young people who are no longer in receipt of aftercare or continuing care is not collected;²² and (3) in understanding the relationship between childhood adversity and risk of suicide, including how coping mechanisms can be taught and care can be provided.²³

Varied recommendations can be found in the National Hub’s survey of bereaved families²⁴ and in CELCIS’s response.²⁵ Many recommendations link in with Plan 21-24’s actions, as improvements in those areas will address risk factors for early death, including support (preventative, mental health), family support, poverty, listening, trauma-informed, and workforce support.

Engagement Analysis

As “Early Death” was a Report ONE thematic, and not a Plan 21-24 action, it was not included in our engagement analysis.

²¹ Mackinnon, 6.

²² Mackinnon, 4.

²³ Mackinnon, 2.

²⁴ ‘Learning from the Experiences of Bereaved Families and Carers’.

²⁵ Mackinnon, ‘CELCIS’s Response to the Scottish Government’s Consultation on “A New Suicide Prevention Strategy for Scotland”’.

Care Capacity

Overall, what we have heard is that the costs of keeping young people in care is not dropping at the same rate as the number of young people in care is dropping. It is assumed that this is due to increased costs associated with various forms of care. As a result, although fewer young people are in care, the cost per person has increased. Data supporting this statement will not be published until March and is confidential until that point, but we have heard that this trend is true of both community placements and residential placements.

When looking at the numerical data from 2021-2022, it's important to keep in mind that while the general trend was that numbers of those in care was already heading down prior to the pandemic, these numbers may be further suppressed due to the cancellation of non-urgent children's hearings between April and September of 2020.¹

Below you will find the rest of our analysis divided into different types of care: Foster care, Residential Care, and Workforce Capacity (which is the best approximation we have for identifying capacity issues among social workers, which is a proxy for information on the workforce supporting those Looked After at Home).

Foster Care Capacity

Desktop Analysis

"At 31 December 2021, there were 59 fostering services in Scotland registered with us, made up of 32 local authority services and 27 voluntary/not-for-profit ... [and] There were no new fostering services registered in 2021."² These 57 services provided 3,415 foster care households, which is an overall decrease of 125 households (3.5%) since 2020. These households were split between Local Authorities (68%) and Voluntary services (32%).³

The number of new foster carers approved each year has fallen for the last three consecutive years. In 2017 and 2018 there were 365 and 370 new households respectively, which has dropped to 312, 286, and 274 in 2019, 2020, and 2021.⁴

'The number of children coming into foster care exceeded the number of new foster care households in 29 of the 32 local authority services.'⁵ And '63% of all services that recruit and approve foster carers – experienced a net loss in foster care households in 2021 this is the highest since recording began.'⁶

"Recruiting households that would foster family groups (Figure 1.9) was a challenge for 40 fostering services (70% of all services) in 2021." If you break this down into voluntary vs Local Authority run

¹ 'Fostering and Adoption 2020–21: A Statistical Bulletin' (Care Inspectorate, December 2021).

² 'Fostering and Adoption 2020–21: A Statistical Bulletin', 8.

³ 'Fostering and Adoption 2020–21: A Statistical Bulletin', 8.

⁴ 'Fostering and Adoption 2020–21: A Statistical Bulletin'.

⁵ 'Fostering and Adoption 2020–21: A Statistical Bulletin'.

⁶ 'Fostering and Adoption 2020–21: A Statistical Bulletin', 28.

⁷ 'Fostering and Adoption 2020–21: A Statistical Bulletin', 17.

homes, 81% of Local Authority services experienced this issue in 2021, up from 78% in 2019 and 2020, and up from 63% in 2017.⁷

The main issues behind these recruitment challenges were: “accommodation constraints (services told us this was due to factors such as housing size, deprivation and local demographics). Difficulty recruiting households in a restricted market; the increased demand on placements arising from continuing care; and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, were also cited as reasons.”⁸

However, it is vital to note that ‘when placed in foster care households, 215 of the family groups (25%) were placed separately and 659 (75% of all family groups) were placed together. This pattern has been similar since recording began.’⁹ There is therefore no strong evidence that the separation of family groups has increased due to the increasing capacity constraints we are witnessing.

Engagement Analysis

There is a common narrative of there being far more children waiting for foster homes than there are foster home placements available, as exemplified in the Sunday Post article ‘Rising fears for children in need as foster services face fresh pressure’. ([The Sunday post, 27th November 2022](#)) Capacity also comes up in conversations about the separation of brothers and sisters as well as unaccompanied asylum seeking children, but more inquiry is needed.

Residential Care Capacity

Desktop Analysis

Every care provider in Scotland is required to be registered with the Care Inspectorate, so their database is one of the most reliable sources there is in terms of residential care and number of beds available in Scotland.

The Promise Scotland staff looked at changes over time in the Care Inspectorate Data, comparing July 2017, July 2021, and July 2022 data. (2017 was the earliest available, 2021 is the most up to date Scottish Government Children Looked After Statistics (CLAS) to compare with, and 2022 is the most up to date. We chose the month of July so it would map most closely to the CLAS data.)

The total number of young people in residential homes in Scotland has decreased from 1,519 in 2017¹⁰ to 1,286 in 2021¹¹ (no numbers yet reported for 2022).

Since 2017, the total number of registered beds in residential homes (including residential special schools) has (net) gone down by 42 places. However, when you break this up into care homes versus residential special schools, you see that care homes actually increased by 180 spaces, and residential schools decreased by 222. So 100% of the reduction in capacity of residential homes is down to the placements available at residential schools - none of which are run by Local Authorities. The current

⁷ ‘Fostering and Adoption 2020–21: A Statistical Bulletin’.

⁸ ‘Fostering and Adoption 2020–21: A Statistical Bulletin’, 17.

⁹ ‘Fostering and Adoption 2020–21: A Statistical Bulletin’, 30.

¹⁰ ‘Care Inspectorate Datastore (as at 31 July 2017) CSV’, n.d., <https://www.careinspectorate.com/index.php/publications-statistics/93-public/datastore?start=130>.

¹¹ ‘Children’s Social Work Statistics 2020/21’ (Scottish Government, 29 March 2022), <https://www.gov.scot/publications/childrens-social-work-statistics-scotland-2020-21/documents/>.

split of residential schools is approximately 60/40 Voluntary vs Private run (and these proportions have remained steady, plus or minus 1%, since 2017).¹²

When you just look at Local Authorities, since 2017 they have lost 21 registered beds in care homes (net) since 2017. The total proportion of residential placements made up by LAs has gone down by 5% (from 46% of all registered places in care homes to 41%).¹³

The proportion of private placements has remained the same (net) since 2017, with the proportion delivered by Voluntary or Not for Profit going up by approximately 6% (Numbers don't add cleanly due to rounding).¹⁴

Assuming that all private residential accommodation are included in the 'other residential' category according to the CLAS data (please see 'Gaps' section below regarding the lack of clarity around categorical definitions), in July of 2021, there were 1286 children and young people in residential homes (including those run by Local Authorities, those run by voluntary organisations, crisis care, secure care, and residential schools). The Care Inspectorate Data shows that there were 2,333 registered places available on the same date, which means only 55% of capacity was filled.¹⁵ In other words, there were 1.8 beds potentially available for every child living in residential care.

Engagement Analysis

Every private residential home has a capacity that needs to be met in order to cover the operating costs of the home (usually around 75% capacity, according to our contact at Scotland Excel). Given the current over-supply of private residential beds and the fact that they need a certain level of capacity to remain open, there is speculation that cross-border placements may be propping up the financial stability of private residential homes. (See 'Gaps' section below for discussion of lack of data on cross-border placements).

There are therefore some concerns that if Scotland clamps down hard on preventing or limiting cross-border placements, it may inadvertently pull the financial rug out from under the entire private residential home sector. This is a small part of the system, but it's still approximately 1000 children and young people who would potentially be uprooted if their homes close due to lack of demand / too few beds being filled. More information is needed on this topic.

As mentioned at the beginning of the Care Capacity section, and as is true for all types of placements, we have also heard about rising costs for residential care. Costs are not dropping proportionately to the decrease of young people in residential care.

Gaps

Unknown Data

¹² Analysis done comparing 'Care Inspectorate Datastore (as at 31 July 2017) CSV'; 'Care Inspectorate Datastore (as at 31 July 2021) CSV', n.d., <https://www.careinspectorate.com/index.php/publications-statistics/93-public/datastore?start=30>.

¹³ Analysis done comparing 'Care Inspectorate Datastore (as at 31 July 2017) CSV'; 'Care Inspectorate Datastore (as at 31 July 2021) CSV'.

¹⁴ Analysis done comparing 'Care Inspectorate Datastore (as at 31 July 2017) CSV'; 'Care Inspectorate Datastore (as at 31 July 2021) CSV'.

¹⁵ Analysis comparing 'Care Inspectorate Datastore (as at 31 July 2021) CSV'; 'Children's Social Work Statistics 2020/21'.

At present there does not seem to be any available data on the number of placements from England, Wales, and Northern Ireland into private residential homes. As mentioned above, this is vital information that we are currently missing. The new guidance and legislation re: cross-border placements means that this data should begin to be collected in 2023 (Assuming that the Care Inspectorate adds that to their Data Store - they are one of the organisations that are required to be notified when a cross-border placement takes place)¹⁶.

Unclear or mis-aligned data categories

While there are explanations and definitions of fields provided for the care inspectorate data, we could not find any definitions of the different answer choices within the fields, so we were reliant on other professional's explanation to us. We know from documentation, for example, that the field 'Subtype' means 'Care Service Sub-type', and we were advised to filter for 'Children & Young People', 'Residential Special School', and 'Respite and short breaks'. We were told that 'Mainstream Residential Schools' does not include those with care experience, so not to include them. The definitions provided in the SSSC and Care Inspectorate document on Staff Vacancies in care services¹⁷ points to the Care Inspectorate having a separate category for fostering and for secure accommodation, but those categories are not evident within the DataStore database. Staff are in the process of following up with the Care Inspectorate at the time of writing.

We have a clearer understanding of the definitions of the categories used by the Scottish Government within their CLAS data. CLAS data separates residential placements into LA/Voluntary Home (which may or may not include the single home run by a Health Board – Scottish Government staff are following up on that). The different categories that Local Authorities can associate with a child in their CLAS return are as follows:

¹⁶ 'The Cross-Border Placements (Effect of Deprivation of Liberty Orders) (Scotland) Regulations 2022: Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)' (Scottish Government, April 2022).

¹⁷ 'Staff Vacancies in Care Services 2021' (Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC): Care Inspectorate, 23 November 2022), <https://www.careinspectorate.com/images/documents/6905/Staff%20vacancies%202021.pdf>.

7. ANNEX C PLACEMENT TYPES WHILST BEING LOOKED AFTER

At home with parent(s): at home with parent(s) or 'relevant person(s)' as defined in Sec. 93(2)(b) of the Children's (Scotland) Act 1995.

With friends / relatives: placed with friends or relatives who are not approved foster carers.

With foster carers provided by the local authority: with approved foster carers provide by the local authority.

With foster carers purchased by the local authority: with approved foster carers purchased by the local authority.

With prospective adopters: with prospective adopters.

Other community: for example, supported accommodation.

Local authority home: in local authority children's home/hostel, local authority home/hostel for children with learning disabilities, local authority home/hostel for physically disabled children.

Voluntary home: in voluntary children's home/hostel, in voluntary home/hostel for children with learning disabilities, in voluntary home/hostel for physically disabled children.

Residential school: in local authority residential school (home/hostel), in voluntary residential school (home/hostel), in private school, in independent school.

Secure accommodation: in secure accommodation.

Crisis Care: for example: in women's refuge, in local authority hostel for offenders, in voluntary hostel for offenders, in local authority hostel for drug/alcohol abusers, in voluntary hostel for drug/alcohol abusers.

Other residential: a known residential setting but does not fit with one of the above.

There is no category distinguishing private from LA / Voluntary for residential accommodation, only for foster care. Therefore, a like-to-like comparative analysis cannot take place.

One can make a clear comparison of how many total registered places there are to LA and Voluntary residential homes versus how many children and young people CLAS data says are in those homes, but when it comes to residential schools there is no way of determining how many of those are voluntary or how many of those are residential without following up with each individual Local Authority.

Workforce Capacity

Desktop Analysis

Vacancies

Overall, in 2021, the following percentages of care providers reported having at least one vacancy:

- 54% of care homes for children and young people
- 100% of secure accommodations
- 84% of residential special school accommodations
- 48% of fostering services

All of these are above the national average of 47% of care sector services reporting at least one vacancy. (Staff Vacancies in Care Services 2021, p13)

However, when you look at the reasons for vacancies that are self-reported by organisations, many children's services were significantly below the national average:

- **Too few applicants in general**, national average of 67%: 'Care homes for children and young people increased 16 percentage points from 36% in 2019 to 52% in 2020.'¹⁸
- **Too few qualified applicants** (national average of 50%): 'Adoption services decreased 47 percentage points from 60% in 2020 to 13% in 2021; Fostering services decreased 12

¹⁸ 'Staff Vacancies in Care Services 2021', 32.

percentage points from 25% in 2020 to 13% in 2021.’ (Staff Vacancies in Care Services 2021, p.33)

- **Vacancies are hard to fill due to competition from other service providers** (national average of 43%): ‘Adoption services remained unchanged at 0% in 2021; Fostering services increased 5 percentage points from 8% in 2020 to 13% in 2021.’ Staff Vacancies in Care Services 2021, p34)
- **Candidates unable to work the hours needed** (national average of 33%): Fostering services remained unchanged from 2020 at 0% in 2021; Adoption services remained unchanged from 2020 at 0% in 2021.’ (Staff Vacancies in Care Services 2021, p35)
- **Competition from other types of work (other industries)** (national average of 28%): Care homes for children and young people increased 5 percentage points from 13% in 2020 to 18% in 2021; Fostering services remained unchanged from 2020 at 0% in 2021.’ (Staff Vacancies in Care Services 2021, p36)
- **Cannot afford wage demands** (national average of 14%): Care homes for children and young people decreased 5 percentage points from 8% in 2020 to 3% in 2021.’ (Staff Vacancies in Care Services 2021, p37)

In one case the children’s care sector was above the national average, but was moving in the right direction (although see caveat about the risk of conflating vacancies with capacity in the ‘Gaps’ section below):

- **Too few qualified applicants** (national average of 50%): ‘Care homes for children and young people decreased 11 percentage points from 73% in 2020 to 62% in 2021.’

Coalition of Care and Support Providers in Scotland

Research done by the membership body representing third sector and not-for-profit social care and support providers points to an ongoing struggle expected to worsen in the winter of 2022/23. Thirty percent of their membership (see note in Gaps below for more information about what proportion of this is made up of those providing care for children and families) shared their top concerns for their organisation in the winter of 2022/23:

- 1) Recruitment/retention
- 2) Uplifts not keeping pace with costs
- 3) Energy costs ([“Urgent Action for Urgent Times: A winter manifesto”](#))

“Forty one percent of responding organisations were preparing for an increase in demand for their services due to the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on individuals and families.” (“Urgent Action for Urgent Times: A winter manifesto”, 2022, p. 2)

“In a response to CCPS data collection in October 2021, 75% of respondents selected pay as the main cause of staffing issues, which have persisted despite organisations investing heavily in recruitment and retention initiatives. We see this reflected again in the most recent survey” (“Urgent Action for Urgent Times: A winter manifesto”, 2022, p. 3)

“CCPS data collection from June 2021 to March 2022 suggests that many organisations have been operating with a vacancy rate of 10-14%. Teams are operating short staffed for long periods of time, leading to exhaustion and burnout that then impacts staff turnover, exacerbating recruitment issues. As the cost-of-living crisis deepens, survey respondents were concerned about the toll of this on staff struggling to “heat, eat, and get to work”, and see in-work poverty as an increasing issue for the sector.” (“Urgent Action for Urgent Times: A winter manifesto”, 2022, p. 3)

“In most cases, organisations are attempting to manage rising costs and increasing demand without additional funding. Several organisations noted that it is now costing them to deliver services for which the local authority has a statutory duty. Contracts are being run on a deficit, needing to be subsidised unsustainably by the use of reserves, or by drawing heavily on charitable donations in those organisations which raise money in this way – a source which is also under pressure as a result of the cost-of-living crisis. An additional £200m has been provided by the Scottish Government to cover local cost pressures, but we have yet to see the evidence that this has been passed on to third sector providers fully.” (“Urgent Action for Urgent Times: A winter manifesto”, 2022, p. 3)

“When asked about the impact of this situation on the services they deliver and the people they support, 63% of responding organisations said they were considering one or more emergency measures. As shown below, 45% of respondents (12 of 27 organisations) may need to reduce current service delivery, with 37% (10) no longer taking new referrals. Service closure and the handing back of contracts were also under consideration in 26% and 22% of cases respectively, leading to a reduction in workforce hours and the possibility of redundancy despite the known staffing issues.” (“Urgent Action for Urgent Times: A winter manifesto”, 2022, p. 5)

Social Work Capacity

“Our context analysis found that the size of the social work workforce in Scotland has remained relatively unchanged in recent years, and now faces retention and recruitment challenges. At the same time, administrative support has decreased by almost a third. In contrast, the policy landscape is characterised by increasing volume and complexity. Social work departments are facing significant challenges due to a combination of unprecedented financial pressures and the cost of implementing several new pieces of legislation simultaneously. These and many other factors influence social work caseloads and their manageability, including case complexity, geography, economy, poverty, and available support services, plus social work staffing and organisational considerations. Over time these interconnected factors have left much of the social work workforce with larger, more administratively demanding and less balanced caseloads comprising individuals with more challenging lives, often presenting higher levels of risk. At the same time there are fewer services available to connect people to.” ([Setting the Bar, Miller and Barrie, 2022](#), p. i)

Desktop Analysis

There seems to be a strong sense of the children’s services sector being stretched far beyond their capacity, but there seems to be less clarity on what specifically are the tension points. As mentioned above, it is likely a complex interaction of multiple causes rather than easily identifiable single causes. More focused inquiry would be needed to tease out more detail on this.

Gaps / Limitations

Most of what is written/published about the capacity and/or vacancies in the care sector includes the entirety of the sector, which is overwhelmingly dominated by services for adults and the elderly. Where possible we have broken down trends to look specifically at children’s services, but that is not always possible. For example, in the CCPS research cited above, only 7 respondents represented organisations that provide services to children and families (making up 26% of the survey respondents overall).

The small number of service providers (particularly in residential or secure care settings) often skews the percentages. For example, when looking at vacancies in Secure Care settings, it is reported that

vacancies are up 60 percentage points¹⁹. However, in real terms, this reflected an increase of three services reporting having at least one vacancy. Likewise, when looking at residential special school accommodation services, an increase of 18 percentage points translates into an increase of 6 services reporting having at least one vacancy²⁰.

Overall the numbers seem to point to a picture that, while poor, is still marginally better than the adult/elderly care sector is facing. However, it is also important to recognise the difference between live vacancies and the capacity/need of an organisation. It is possible that an organisation may stop recruiting for a post that has laid vacant for too long, or may look to save costs by not replacing a staff member when they leave. Therefore, while staff vacancies may be a decent proxy for workforce capacity, we must also recognise the possibility for inflated numbers due to organisations simply ceasing to recruit for previously open positions.

¹⁹ 'Staff Vacancies in Care Services 2021'.

²⁰ 'Staff Vacancies in Care Services 2021', 14.

Fundamentals: What matters to children and families

Desktop Analysis

The document analysis coded minimal material to “What matters to children and families”. The most likely explanation for this is that material that could fit in this action were a better fit in other actions, so was allocated elsewhere.

Analysis did surface two quotes from organisations, which reflect their commitment to focusing on what matters to children and families:

- The CHS’s annual “Report and Accounts” states that: “We want the hearings experience to be the best it can be and produce sound decisions which move infants, children, young people and their families forward, positively, in their journey. We want children’s hearings to be seen as an exemplar of empathetic, loving and respectful practice that promote dignity and avoid stigma”.¹
- And the Children’s Commissioners of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales reiterated the need for: “All governments [to] amend legislation as necessary to ensure children’s best interests are a primary consideration in all matters that affect them”.²

Engagement Analysis

¹ [CHS] Annual Report and Accounts 2021-22’ (Children’s Hearings Scotland (CHS), 25 October 2022), <https://www.chscotland.gov.uk/resources/reports-and-planning/chs-annual-report-and-accounts-2021-2022/>.

² ‘Report of the Children’s Commissioners: Examination of the Combined Sixth and Seventh Periodic Reports’.

Fundamentals: Listening

Desktop Analysis

Engagement Analysis

DRAFT

Fundamentals: Poverty

Desktop Analysis

Engagement Analysis

DRAFT

Fundamentals: Children's rights

Desktop Analysis

Engagement Analysis

DRAFT

Fundamentals: Language

Desktop Analysis

The document analysis coded minimal material to “Language”. Analysis did surface three quotes from organisations, which reflect their commitment to tackling stigma and what steps they have already taken:

- Children Hearing’s System: “We want the hearings experience to be the best it can be and produce sound decisions which move infants, children, young people and their families forward, positively, in their journey. We want children’s hearings to be seen as an exemplar of empathetic, loving and respectful practice that promote dignity and avoid stigma”.¹
- Police Scotland: “Officers said that this sort of group is important because it tackles stigma, involves those with lived experience in policy and decision making, drives better engagement with the Care Experienced community and encourages community among officers”.²
- HUB for SUCCESS (re: education): “Evidently teachers reported an increase in awareness of care experience and although there is still work to be done to compound and normalise this understanding, Learning Explorers has started the conversation. Moving forward, it would be important for teachers to continue these discussions, particularly given the evidence to suggest that they are influential in terms of developing attitudes and cultures amongst our children and young people”.³

Engagement Analysis

¹ ‘CHS Report and Accounts 2021-22’.

² ‘Police Scotland – Care Experienced Group: A Case Study’ (Police Scotland: Who Cares? Scotland, 16 July 2022), <https://www.whocaresScotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Copy-of-Police-Scotland-CE-Officers-Group-2.pdf>.

³ ‘Reaching Back Earlier for Care Experienced Learners: An Evaluation of the Learning Explorers Pilot’ (HUB for SUCCESS (Support for University and College for Care Experienced People South East Scotland), November 2022), <https://hubforsuccess.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/LE-evaluation-report.pdf>.

A Good Childhood: Support

Desktop Analysis

Although support is a broad action in Plan 21-24, limited material from the analysis was coded to this topic. This may be explained, similarly to the action “what matters to children and families”, by relevant material being a better fit in other actions.

The Children’s Commissioners of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales touched on the status of support provided for children in the areas of domestic abuse and mental health:

- Domestic abuse: “The Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 reflects the understanding of domestic abuse as a course of conduct. The Act recognises the impact of domestic abuse on children through the introduction of a statutory aggravator where children are affected by domestic abuse, however there is no specific offence in relation to children... Recommendation: Children who experience domestic abuse should have comprehensive legal protections and access to appropriate support”.¹
- Mental Health: “In Scotland, the Auditor General in 2018 found community health services “complex and fragmented” with support ‘largely focussed on specialist care and responding to crisis’. Mental health support in schools was improved with the addition of counsellors in secondary schools in October 2020, however this only met the level of unmet demand pre-pandemic. Disabled children, those with complex health needs and those experiencing other adversity are less likely to be able to access appropriate community mental health services.

The most recent quarterly CAMHS waiting time data reported that 68.4% of children were seen within 18 weeks of referral. The number of children being seen by CAMHS is increasing but waiting lists are still increasing. This is a concerning pattern which needs more information. Concerns continue to exist about high rates of rejected referrals.

Children aged 16 and 17 years old are treated as adults by the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003. In 2022 the independent Scottish Mental Health Law Review recommended extensive reform of relevant legislation to ensure compliance with human rights law and for CAMHS minimum core obligations to include availability to children up to 18”.²

¹ ‘Report of the Children’s Commissioners: Examination of the Combined Sixth and Seventh Periodic Reports’.

² ‘Report of the Children’s Commissioners: Examination of the Combined Sixth and Seventh Periodic Reports’, 39–40.

Engagement Analysis

13 of the 35 responses to the engagement questionnaire (representing The Promise Scotland's activity with 32 local authorities and 3 key stakeholders) did not have answers relating to "support". As with other actions, this was largely due to lack of engagement up to November 2022, rather than reflecting lack of activity.

The remaining responses were varied in scope and detail, as is keeping with the wide-ranging nature of the 'support' action. Many of the responses included information that would best fit in other actions, including 'education', 'moving on', 'family support', or 'relationships'. This is reflective of differing understandings of what each action entails, the overlap that occurs in some areas, and the complexity of ordering aspects of children and young people's lives into structured a framework. It also reflects overlap within Plan 21-24, where the action 'support' overlaps with 'right to an education', as it includes the meeting of educational needs.

Many of the responses included specific work that was ongoing in local authorities, but some repeated topics emerged. Overall, responses reflected a commitment to The Promise and to supporting care-experienced children and young people. Several responses referred to work being done with Whole Family Support, including the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund (WFWF), as a means of providing support to care-experienced children and young people. Responses also highlighted ongoing cooperation with other agencies or organisations, commissioned services, and third sector support offerings, in order to meet diverse needs.

In terms of education, individualised support was highlighted by several local authorities, including specialised support for children with additional support needs (ASNs). Local authorities have formalised identifying what support is needed through the continued use of Coordinated Support Plans (CSPs) for every child in care, and Individualised Education Plans (IEPs) when required. For health, several responses indicated that local authorities are prioritising ease of access to "LAC" nurses and health visitors, who provide both physical and mental health care.

Discussions of barriers highlighted a lack of resourcing, which makes it difficult for local authorities to keep children near to their home area and difficult for children and families to access support offerings, particularly mental health support.

A Good Childhood: A right to an education

Desktop Analysis

Due to “Right to an Education” being both a [Plan 21-24](#) action and a [Promise Oversight Board Report ONE](#) thematic, this topic was given more capacity in analysis, and an additional 13 documents were referenced beyond the standardized 20 documents. Given the broad nature of education, this topic touches on other actions, including relationships, moving on, support, listening, policy coherence, and poverty.

Current Outcomes

- “Education outcomes for looked after children have improved over the last decade. However, there are still large gaps compared with all pupils”.¹
- “Attainment for school leavers who were looked after within the last year has risen over the last ten years, especially at SCQF levels 5 and 6. This follows a similar pattern to attainment levels for all children. However, looked after children continue to have lower attainment than all children at all SCQF levels”.²
 - “Looked after leavers who were in foster care or with friends or relatives had higher attainment than other placement types, especially at home with parents”.³
- “Looked after school leavers are less likely to go to positive destinations than school leavers in general, especially higher education”.⁴
- “The exclusion rate for looked after pupils was more than six times the rate for all pupils in 2020/21, but this gap has reduced since 2012/13”.⁵
- “A lower proportion of looked after children achieve the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) level relevant to their stage compared with all children across all organisers (subjects). The size of the gap between looked after children and all children varies across the different subjects”.⁶
 - “Achievement of CfE levels is lowest for those looked after at home and those looked after in residential accommodation”.⁷

Completed work (2022)

The Improvement Service and Children in Scotland both highlighted success in Early Learning and Childcare services and funding.

- The Improvement Service highlighted their April 2022 launch of the Recovery and Delivery programme, which supports “ongoing improvements in Early Learning

¹ ‘Education Outcomes for Looked After Children 2020/21’ (Scottish Government, 28 July 2022), 1.

² ‘Education Outcomes for Looked After Children 2020/21’, 6.

³ ‘Education Outcomes for Looked After Children 2020/21’, 6.

⁴ ‘Education Outcomes for Looked After Children 2020/21’, 13.

⁵ ‘Education Outcomes for Looked After Children 2020/21’, 25.

⁶ ‘Education Outcomes for Looked After Children 2020/21’, 29.

⁷ ‘Education Outcomes for Looked After Children 2020/21’, 29.

and Childcare services, and to support the new COVID Recovery Strategy workstream,” alongside other efforts to improve ELC services across Scotland⁸

- Children in Scotland highlighted the Early Learning & Childcare (ELC) Inclusion Fund, which supports children with ASN.⁹

Launch of a national discussion

- “In June 2022, Education Secretary Shirley-Anne Somerville appealed for fresh, innovative ideas to help to deliver change and drive improvement in Scottish education. ‘The National Discussion’ with all stakeholders, including learners, will inform wide-ranging plans, including the creation of three new education bodies and a review of qualifications and assessment”.¹⁰

Changes to the Care Experienced Student Bursary

- Payment of the bursary used to be linked to attendance (required 100% attendance), which resulted in many students not receiving financial support. The HUB for SUCCESS supported work in reviewing this policy, resulting in policy changes to focus on engagement, rather than punishment. The HUB for SUCCESS summarises this work: “By listening, by taking views seriously and by working in partnership we were able to help students on an individual basis, but we were also able to address the structural and systemic barriers getting in the way of our learner’s progress”.¹¹

The Care Inspectorate commissioned an evaluation of the ELC Quality Improvement Programme, which “explored the efficacy and impact the programme is having on improving outcomes and experiences for children, their families and the settings they attend”.¹² This evaluation surfaced work completed, as well as gaps.

⁸ Cllr Shona Morrison and Sarah Gadsden, ‘Improvement Service Annual Report 2021’ (Improvement Service, November 2022).

⁹ ‘The Year 2021-22 in Numbers’ (Children in Scotland, June 2022), https://childreninscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/AR_Infographic-22_FINAL.pdf.

¹⁰ ‘Policy Briefing: Learning and Education – Evidence and Our Calls for Change’ (Children in Scotland, November 2022), 3, https://childreninscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Manifesto-briefings_Education.pdf?utm_source=phpList&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Children+in+Scotland+News+Update+28%2F11+%27DWP+deducting+on+average+%C2%A380+a+month+from+Scottish+families+on+UC%27&utm_content=HTML.

¹¹ ‘Spotlight on Good Practice: The Care Experienced Student Bursary’ (HUB for SUCCESS (Support for University and College for Care Experienced People South East Scotland), August 2022), 2, <https://hubforsuccess.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Spotlight-on-Good-Practice.pdf>.

¹² ‘Evaluation to Measure and Understand in Greater Depth the Efficacy and Impact of the Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Improvement Programme’ (Care Inspectorate, October 2022), 3, https://hub.careinspectorate.com/how-we-support-improvement/care-inspectorate-programmes-and-publications/early-learning-and-childcare-improvement-programme/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery.

- The eligibility criteria limit the type of settings that can take place. The report suggests that it would be beneficial to expand the program.¹³
- “Research participants rated the quality of support provided through the programme very highly”, but some settings require further support to engage with the resources.¹⁴
- Positive impact is discussed at length.¹⁵
- Capacity and funding are the barriers for further implementation and improvement “The current ELC Improvement Team does not have the capacity to support substantially more settings with the same level of support as its stands currently... Without continuation of funding, it is likely that many settings will struggle to make the level of improvements to the quality of care that has been possible while the programme has been ongoing”.¹⁶

Ongoing work

Scottish Government and COSLA have updated with progress for Additional Support for Learning Project:

- “There has been significant work in support of delivery of Children and Young People’s Engagement, Participation & Rights. There are 14 recommendations in support of this theme, of these 3 are completed with the majority of the others ongoing”.¹⁷
- Future work includes:
 - A work plan from the Project Board, “working closely with the ASL Network, to identify priority areas of work and how they can best support delivery of this work”.¹⁸
 - “The Behaviour in Scottish Schools Research has recently been commissioned. Fieldwork will be undertaken in early 2023, initial findings are due in Autumn 2023 and the final report is due in Spring 2024”.¹⁹
 - “The national discussion to develop a vision for the future of education in Scotland launched on 21 September 2022. Extensive engagement is planned with children and young people with additional support needs”.²⁰

Scottish Attainment Challenge

¹³ ‘Evaluation: ELC Improvement Programme’, 44.

¹⁴ ‘Evaluation: ELC Improvement Programme’, 45.

¹⁵ ‘Evaluation: ELC Improvement Programme’, 45–46.

¹⁶ ‘Evaluation: ELC Improvement Programme’, 46–47.

¹⁷ ‘Additional Support for Learning Review – Action Plan - 2nd Progress Report’ (COSLA: Scottish Government, 30 November 2022), 5, <https://www.gov.scot/publications/additional-support-learning-review-action-plan-second-progress-report/>.

¹⁸ ‘Additional Support for Learning Review – Action Plan - 2nd Progress Report’, 10.

¹⁹ ‘Additional Support for Learning Review – Action Plan - 2nd Progress Report’, 14.

²⁰ ‘Additional Support for Learning Review – Action Plan - 2nd Progress Report’, 15.

- “All local authorities (LAs) have worked with their attainment advisors to review their progress and identify clear next steps. Whilst there are some commonalities, next steps are relevant to local authority contexts and where they are in their improvement journey. Key themes emerging include the effective use of the Attainment Scotland Fund (ASF), stretch aims and data. All of which are important to the successful implementation of the new SAC Framework”.²¹
- “[Pupil Equity Fund] was identified as a next step by the majority of local authorities. For some, progress involved reviewing the mechanisms for planning and reporting within the existing school improvement planning cycle and reporting on standards and qualities. Auditing of PEF plans to provide bespoke advice and guidance to schools is a feature of the progress being made by local authorities and, in many, this work is supported by the attainment advisor”.²²
- “Although less than half of all local authorities have included a next step on data this has previously been a focus for many”.²³
 - “Half of all local authorities identified a wide range of data improvement outcomes in their next steps. More than half have made solid progress on those outcomes... Many local authorities have reviewed and improved the way data is collected and collated with some introducing new software and the management of data systems to deliver this. Key areas for the use and analysis of data includes the focus on improving outcomes for Care Experienced Children and Young People, those learners targeted through PEF and attendance and health and wellbeing”.²⁴
- “The majority of local authorities explicitly identified improvements in their work to support Care Experienced Children and Young People (CECYP) in their next steps. Just under half were able to report improvements in supporting this group of children and young people. Some have made progress by working in partnership with third sector organisations”²⁵
- “Further developing Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL) with a focus on equity was included in the next steps by a third of local authorities. In relation to the progress made, a number of local authorities have indicated that professional learning builds capacity and confidence in using data”.²⁶

Gaps

²¹ ‘Scottish Attainment Challenge: Recovery and Progress Report on 2021-22’ (Education Scotland, 15 November 2022), 17, <https://education.gov.scot/education-scotland/news-and-events/news/education-scotland-publishes-the-scottish-attainment-challenge-recovery-and-progress-report-for-2021-22/>.

²² ‘Scottish Attainment Challenge: Recovery and Progress Report on 2021-22’, 5.

²³ ‘Scottish Attainment Challenge: Recovery and Progress Report on 2021-22’, 19.

²⁴ ‘Scottish Attainment Challenge: Recovery and Progress Report on 2021-22’, 7.

²⁵ ‘Scottish Attainment Challenge: Recovery and Progress Report on 2021-22’, 8.

²⁶ ‘Scottish Attainment Challenge: Recovery and Progress Report on 2021-22’, 10.

Analysis surfaced gaps in the areas of: access, additional support needs, relationships, voice, and wellbeing. Children in Scotland suggest that reform in the areas of governance, policy coherence, and rights-based approaches, is needed to address these gaps.²⁷

Access—UCAS discussed care-experienced students' options and barriers for positive destinations, while HUB for SUCCESS' Evaluation of the Learning Explorers Pilot suggests solutions for widening access.²⁸

Additional Support Needs—HUB for SUCCESS and Children in Scotland surfaced concerns regarding ASN support in schools, particularly for those students in transition periods and for children who are unable to attend school.²⁹

Poverty—HUB for SUCCESS and COSLA both touched on issues of poverty.³⁰ HUB for SUCCESS's evaluation specifically raised: the delay of free school meals to all primary children, need for national guidance to ensure affordability of uniforms, and the issue of free public transport not including ferries.³¹

Relationships—Children in Scotland expressed concerns that the current approach to education creates barriers to positive relationships, including "large class sizes, a focus on high-stake exams rather than pupil and staff wellbeing and teacher class contact time being too high".³²

Voice—Children in Scotland, HUB for SUCCESS, and the Children's Commissioners of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales highlighted the need for listening to children's voices and fostering participation.³³

Wellbeing—Children in Scotland raised concerns that current initiatives (including the Pupil Equity Fund, the Attainment Challenge, and Personal and Social Education) are not having necessary impact. Aligned with this, Children in Scotland expressed the view that the current assessment system does not support a wellbeing approach.³⁴

Further Reading

Impact of the pandemic:

- Cullinane, Carl, Jake Anders, Alice De Gennaro, Erin Early, Erica Holt-White, Rebecca Montacute, Xin Shao, and James Yarde. 'Briefing No. 1 - Lockdown

²⁷ 'Policy Briefing: Learning and Education', 2–4, 14.

²⁸ 'Next Steps: What Is the Experience of Students from a Care Background in Education?' (Unite Foundation: UCAS, 30 November 2022), 5–6, https://www.ucas.com/next-steps-what-experience-students-care-background-education?hash=aZKGPUscIn70ypzKB0QE-1YObNszyE2iNz_xQjoVbSM; 'Three in Five with Experience of Being in Care given No Guidance When Applying to Higher Education' (Unite Foundation: UCAS, 30 November 2022), 2, <https://www.ucas.com/file/658616/download?token=j71YuijT>; 'Reaching Back Earlier for Care Experienced Learners: An Evaluation of the Learning Explorers Pilot'.

²⁹ 'Policy Briefing: Learning and Education', 8–9; 'Reaching Back Earlier for Care Experienced Learners: An Evaluation of the Learning Explorers Pilot'.

³⁰ 'Scottish Attainment Challenge: Recovery and Progress Report on 2021-22', 3; 'Reaching Back Earlier for Care Experienced Learners: An Evaluation of the Learning Explorers Pilot'.

³¹ 'Reaching Back Earlier for Care Experienced Learners: An Evaluation of the Learning Explorers Pilot'.

³² 'Policy Briefing: Learning and Education', 7.

³³ 'Policy Briefing: Learning and Education', 5–6; 'Report of the Children's Commissioners: Examination of the Combined Sixth and Seventh Periodic Reports'; 'Reaching Back Earlier for Care Experienced Learners: An Evaluation of the Learning Explorers Pilot'.

³⁴ 'Policy Briefing: Learning and Education', 6, 11, 13.

Learning'. COSMO, 13 October 2022.

<https://cosmostudy.uk/publications/lockdown-learning>.

- Montacute, Rebecca, Erica Holt-White, Jake Anders, Carl Cullinane, Alice De Gennaro, Erin Early, Xin Shao, and James Yarde. 'Briefing No. 2 - Education Recovery and Catch Up'. COSMO, 13 October 2022.
<https://cosmostudy.uk/publications/education-recovery-and-catch-up>.
- Yarde, James, Xin Shao, Jake Anders, Carl Cullinane, Alice De Gennaro, Erin Early, Erica Holt-White, and Rebecca Montacute. 'Briefing No. 3 - Future Plans and Aspirations'. COSMO, 13 October 2022.
<https://cosmostudy.uk/publications/future-plans-and-aspirations>.

Digital exclusion:

- Treanor, Morag, and Patricio Troncoso. 'Digitally Excluded: Inequalities in the Access and Use of Online Learning Technologies in Scottish Secondary Schools.' *International Journal of Population Data Science* 7, no. 3 (25 August 2022).
<https://doi.org/10.23889/ijpds.v7i3.1819>.

Engagement Analysis

There were numerous and wide-ranging examples within the engagement documentation, of work currently being undertaken across Scotland to achieve this plan 21-24 action.

Poverty

Many areas were prioritising work to tackle poverty in recognition of the impacts of poverty on attainment:

- grants and digital equipment and devices for care experienced children and young people
- targeted work to increase uptake of free school meals and setting up breakfast clubs
- Cost of school day
- Pupil equity fund
- Support to family to ensure they are receiving all rights and entitlements

Health and wellbeing

e.g. school-based counsellors and health and wellbeing officers, support to access free physical activities, green spaces and recreation spaces, support to take part in extracurricular activities.

Data and monitoring

Mapping to better understand the needs of children and young people who are struggling at school and work to identify and develop ways to measure and track outcomes using numerical data.

Creation of new roles and teams

Many areas had virtual headteachers in place to support schools to ensure care experienced children's needs are being met.

Multi agency teams to strengthen joint working between key partners in children's services, schools and police, such as improvement and development of multi-agency planning processes and sharing ownership and communication of risk.

Some areas had created posts, intended to ensure children with care experience and their families are supported to take part in school life, both in school and at home. E.g. mentoring, counselling services in schools, family link workers, outreach workers, home tutors

Projects to increase support to families to enable children to stay home and access education

Training staff in and implementing trauma-informed responses and culture in schools

Support for transitions and positive destinations (examples)

For example, support for young people transitioning from school to college and higher education, such as supported study sessions digital platforms for care experienced students in higher education from the point of application, providing peer support and a way to share views, and 'named person' for each care experienced student, as well as targeted support for care experienced students wishing to access higher education.

Support with independent living skills and schemes such as Shannon's Box which is designed by care experienced young people to be given to all young people entering care to help young people settle and know they are not alone.

Flexible learning

e.g. virtual schools and bespoke timetables and curriculum for care experienced children

A Good Childhood: Relationships

Desktop Analysis

No information from the analysis was coded to the action 'Relationships'. This is likely due to analysis being limited to only 20 documents from 14 sources (see methodology for more information about the documents included). As such, a lack of information in this appendix should not assume lack of activity in Scotland.

Engagement Analysis

Of the 35 responses to the engagement questionnaire (representing The Promise Scotland's activity with 32 local authorities and 3 key stakeholders), half did not include answers relating to this action. The most common reasons given for not responding were: (a) limited engagement and (b) the topic not having been part of discussions thus far, which is reflective of the early stage of engagement at the time of this questionnaire (November 2022) was in the early stages. The completed responses surfaced both positive intentions and actions, as well as barriers to progress.

While some areas have already implemented approaches, changed practices, or formulated guidance, the majority of what was discussed are future plans or aspirations. Many responses and documents generally highlighted a commitment to encouraging and enabling relationships for children and young people in care, alongside teaching children about safe and healthy relationships. More specific topics discussed included intentions to:

- Keep children within an hour of their home area
- Implement approaches that support retaining meaningful relationships (e.g. Life Long Links)
- Support families to develop their own plan
- Change workforce understanding of relationships (e.g. contact versus family time)
- Hire support worker or (in residential homes) link nurse to support children's relationships and connections to family
- Identify family members, or others who are important to the child, to best support their relationships

Challenges and barriers primarily related to gaps in provisions due to resourcing, including lack of a physical space for family time to take place and lack of available places for multiple siblings to live together. COVID was also cited as a factor in interrupting relationships, compounded by children and young people's personal loss due to bereavement.

Lastly, the responses unexpectedly surfaced a lack of clarity between the actions 'relationships' and 'ongoing relationships', with 6 responses (17%) providing information about ongoing relationships with the workforce.

A Good Childhood: Brothers and sisters

Desktop Analysis.

Due to “Brothers and Sisters” being both a [Plan 21-24](#) action and a [Promise Oversight Board Report ONE](#) thematic, this topic was given more capacity in analysis, and an additional 5 documents were referenced beyond the standardized 20 documents. However, little in the way of overarching understanding surfaced from the documents.

Sources and activities for this action include: reforms to the CHS; the Stand Up for Siblings Partnership; the National Implementation Group (Staying Together and Connected); and the Sisters & Brothers Collective learning event at STAR. A brief review of each follows:

- CHS reforms are considering brothers and sisters, including: “A new duty on a Children’s Hearing to consider the need for a direction about contact with the child’s brothers and sisters”.¹ Since July 2021, “brothers, sisters, people with brother/sister-like relationships are given new rights in hearings. Within the changes, there was a considerable emphasis placed on Panel Members, as decision-makers within children’s hearings, to consider contact and maintaining brother, sister, and brother/sister-like relationships. We created a new training module for Panel Members, so they understood the changes and what they meant for hearings”.²
- Stand Up for Siblings: “The Care Inspectorate is working as part of the partnership Stand Up for Siblings, to raise awareness of the importance of sibling relationships and to encourage and support practice improvements”.³
- Among various other activities, the National Implementation Group: Staying Together and Connected’s legal group is exploring a “National Assessment Framework” that “could be used earlier in the process and support a coordinated and consistent approach to help map and understand relationships”.⁴
- “Sisters & Brothers Collective learning event was held in October 2022, hosted by Star, Siblings reunited and partners: Association for Fostering, Kinship and Adoption (AFKA) Scotland and The Promise Scotland.”⁵ The

¹ [SCRA] Annual Report 2021/22: Ensuring Positive Futures for Children and Young People in Scotland.’ (Scottish Children’s Reporter Administration (SCRA), 27 October 2022), <https://www.scra.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/SCRA-Annual-Report-2021-2022.pdf>.

² ‘Impact Report 2021-22’ (Children’s Hearings Scotland (CHS), October 2022), <https://www.chscotland.gov.uk/media/jhlcduwr/impact-report-2022.pdf>.

³ ‘Corporate Plan 2022-2025: Care. It’s What We Do’ (Care Inspectorate, 9 May 2022), <https://www.careinspectorate.com/index.php/news/6664-care-inspectorate-corporate-plan-2022-25-published>.

⁴ ‘National Implementation Group: Staying Together and Connected (Meeting Minutes 2 Nov)’ (National Implementation Group: Staying Together and Connected, 2 November 2022), 3.

⁵ ‘Sisters & Brothers Collective Learning Event at STAR, 14.10.22: Reflections, Themes, Action’ (Siblings Reunited (STAR), 14 October 2022), 1.

learning event surfaced themes of individual approaches, language, values and attitudes, relationships, organisational culture, and workforce support.⁶

'Brothers and Sisters' was also discussed in the Scottish Journal of Residential Child Care, which highlighted work done by the Residential Care Workforce to ensure sibling contact, positive childhood experiences, and provision of support in "delicate circumstances".⁷

- "Thinking very carefully about the needs of each child and young person and how best their needs can be met, in the shorter and longer term, involves intricate planning. It may not be possible, or at that time the right thing, for brothers and sisters to live together. It is important that these decisions are kept under review".⁸
- "There needs to be real commitment, investment, and energy to make children and young people spending time with their brothers and sisters a reality. There is increasing recognition within residential childcare that time together for brothers and sisters who live apart should be part of fun childhood experiences. Stilted, awkward times spent in social work offices are now much less common. Such experiences are the opposite of having a good childhood. Instead, residential workers are organising fishing trips, outings to the beach, sleepovers, and holidays".⁹
- "Finding a way for brothers and sisters to keep in touch in delicate circumstances require diplomacy and sometimes tenacity... Social workers may not have the time or desire to navigate and negotiate such scenarios. Skilled and knowledgeable residential workers can help find a way forward, helping to repair and restore fractured relationships. They can work alongside families to provide reassurance and support".¹⁰
- "Residential work is developing and evolving to ensure that The Promise is kept. Work to support the rights of care experienced brothers and sisters is very much part of keeping The Promise. It would be great if this work was more fully 'seen', recognised, and understood".¹¹

Engagement Analysis

Overall, organisations welcomed the legislative changes introduced around brothers and sisters but acknowledged that there are significant challenges and barriers to implementing them.

Those challenges centred around a lack of resources, in particular:

⁶ 'Sisters & Brothers Collective Learning Event at STAR, 14.10.22: Reflections, Themes, Action', 8.

⁷ Morris, 'Seldom Seen Sibling Support: Exploring the Changing Experiences of Siblings in Scottish Residential Childcare Services'.

⁸ Morris, 4.

⁹ Morris, 5.

¹⁰ Morris, 7.

¹¹ Morris, 8.

- the lack of availability of foster carers who are able or willing to take groups of more than two siblings due to physical space, as well as regulatory issues attached to the care of larger groups of children
- providing suitable, flexible spaces and supports for families to spend time together
- difficulties in rural areas regarding limited transport links and lack of homes available within close reach of one another

However, there appeared to be high levels of commitment to this [Plan 21-24](#) action, with a lot of tangible activity underway, including:

- use of existing data, as well as work to improve data around brothers and sisters to better understand the local picture e.g. knowing how many children were separated, how far away from one another they are living, but also developing the use of more qualitative data such as evidence of children being involved in decision making around their siblings and living arrangements, evidence of plans being put in place to ensure children and young people can keep in touch with those who are important to them, within their plans.
- staff training on the legislative changes and implications for practice, incorporation of the voice of children and developing understanding of who and what is important to them about living with and spending time with their brothers and sisters and other who are important to them.
- building in senior leadership ownership and scrutiny over any decisions to separate brothers and sisters, as well as building in processes to ensure children are supported to keep in touch and spend time together in plans and reviews.
- collaborating with families on developing innovative and flexible spaces that enable families that are separated to spend time together.
- developing programmes that support children and young people to keep in touch with people that matter to them and to spend time together.
- drives to recruit more foster carers who are able to look after larger sibling groups.
- increasing availability of 'placements' within local areas that mean children who have been separated can live closer together.
- work to support families to stay together and increase the number of children who can be looked after at home or in kinship settings.

A Good Childhood: Youth justice

Desktop Analysis

Information on youth justice is very limited from the documents analysed, as only a single document was coded to this action. This is likely because the documents' purpose does not include discussions of legislation. Further analysis that looks specifically at documents relating to youth justice is needed.

The document from the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland (CYPCS) discussed three aspects of youth justice: Young Offender Institutes, inter-country accommodation, and Police Scotland.¹ However, information about YOI and Police Scotland dated to before March 2022, so does not fall within the brief of this analysis.

Regarding cross-border 'placements', CYPCS raised concerns about children being "deprived of their liberty" or being "placed in unregistered and unregulated children's homes without the knowledge of local services such as health and education". There was further concern that: "As Scotland has a separate legal system, these children do not receive the same legal protection as children residing in Scotland. CYPCS do not believe the current regulatory 'fix' for these placements adequately protects the rights of these children and in particular, it allows placements to become long-term rather than temporary".²

Engagement Analysis

Overall, there is less engagement information about this [Plan 21-24](#) action than there is for most others, with many engagement documents stating that this had either not been a focus of discussion yet or was not mentioned explicitly in the documents that were analysed in this iteration of the feedback loop (Children's Services Plans, Corporate Parenting Plans, Child Poverty Action Plans).

Two challenges were mentioned under this [Plan 21-24](#) action in the engagement material. One was that there is currently a lack of steer on engagement with the judiciary on this in respect the promise, specifically the new Sentencing Guidelines and in relation to domestic abuse and the removal of presumption of age for evidence within The Children (Scotland) Act. The other related to the potential challenges posed by the Care and Justice Bill in relation to including 16/17-year-olds within Hearings, since under the current model this would require many more panel members to be able to properly resource the additional hearings this will entail.

Other engagement material analysed described a range of activities underway to respond to this [Plan 21-24](#) area, and included:

- Staff training on a number of relevant topics including
 - the interface between children's rights and children who come into conflict with the law
 - The Whole System Approach
 - Awareness raising of the promise and the over representation of children with care experience in criminal justice system

¹ Report of the Children's Commissioners: Examination of the Combined Sixth and Seventh Periodic Reports'.

² Report of the Children's Commissioners: Examination of the Combined Sixth and Seventh Periodic Reports'.

- Trauma-informed and ACE awareness raising e.g. screening of the film 'Resilience: The Biology of Stress and the Science of Hope' followed by a panel of community safety and justice practitioners.
- Schemes aimed at diverting children away from criminalisation such as:
 - Restorative justice intervention for young people aged 16-25
 - Police producing written guidance to divert young people from prosecution plus
 - tests of change e.g. 'Not at Home' to create shared responsibility between agencies for missing episodes and to reduce call outs to police from children's homes to ensure more proportionate and appropriate police involvement
- Partnership work in schools to promote relational practice and improve trust and relationships between children and the police, as well as rolling programmes of awareness raising for children in schools to prevent harm e.g. bullying, cybercrime, hate crime, gender-based violence etc.
- Supporting children at risk of coming into conflict with the law through transitions into adulthood (see 'Moving On') as well as through whole family support approaches (see 'Whole Family Support')
- Amplifying voices of children who are in conflict with the law in the design of services that are for them- 'Inclusion as Prevention'.
- Reconfiguring criminal justice social work teams to enable workers to specifically work with young people and improve links with other relevant services for children, enabling more holistic and responsive planning to respond to the needs of children at risk of coming into conflict with the law.
- Changes to language and improving strengths-based approaches e.g. Talking Hope project- explores how thinking and talking about hope promotes better futures for young people by promoting strengths based and relational practice-the project launched its website in November 2022- intended as a 'hope reservoir' when hope is running low.

A Good Childhood: Advocacy

Desktop Analysis

The document analysis coded minimal material to “Advocacy”. Reference to progress made by SCRA was from before the time period of our brief (Jan 2022), so was not included in analysis.¹ A December 2022 article written by Shelly Reed, participation co-ordinator at Coram Voice, criticised current advocacy services for being not accessible enough—with a third of CE children and young people not aware of how to get advocacy services—and called for advocacy to be transformed into an opt-out model, due to the significance of having an advocate from the point of entering care.²

Engagement Analysis

13 of 35 responses (representing The Promise Scotland’s activity with 32 local authorities and 3 key stakeholders) did not have information about advocacy, citing lack of engagement thus far. Responses for this topic were frequently light on detail, with some difficult to discern between descriptions of existing practices and future plans or aspirations. Due to this, findings about advocacy provision is limited.

Most of the other responses (14) stated that the local authority already had commissioned advocacy services providing support to all care-experienced children and young people (e.g. Who Cares? Scotland or Barnardo’s ‘Hear 4u’). There is ongoing work in several other local authorities to tender for an advocacy service or to fully embed a service for the local authority. Multiple responses highlighted a commitment to life-long advocacy, but the consensus was that organisations are waiting on The Promise Scotland to complete scoping of a national advocacy model.

In regards to barriers, one response highlighted challenges with capacity and another raised a lack of information evidencing if advocacy was consistently offered to those with care experience. However, other responses did not discuss challenges or barriers to advocacy provision.

¹ ‘SCRA Annual Report 2021/22’.

² Shelly Reed, “Advocates and Independent Visitors Made Me Feel Listened to - but Too Many Children in Care Lack This”, *Community Care* (blog), 1 December 2022, <https://www.communitycare.co.uk/2022/12/01/advocates-and-independent-visitors-made-me-feel-listened-to-and-supported-when-in-care-but-too-many-children-go-without/>.

A Good Childhood: Moving on

Desktop Analysis

Analysis surfaced limited information under the action 'Moving On', with only one source coded to the topic. However, work done in November 2022 looked at 'Homelessness' as a thematic, analysing 18 documents, and this material has been appended to 'Moving On'. As such, analysis on other aspects of the topic (e.g. transitions) is limited.

Research in Practice's article on transitional safeguarding questioned if protected status would support young people better; called for changes to eligibility criteria housing support; and highlighted the need for individual pathway planning and support, to best prepare and teach young people skills before they turn 18.¹

Desktop Analysis –

Current State (2022):

Homelessness (applications and individuals) increased in Scotland in 2021/22: "The 28,882 homeless households in 2021/22 contained a total of 46,964 people, comprising 32,592 adults and 14,372 children. The number of adults increased by 6%, while the number of children increased by 17% compared to 2020/21".² The increase can largely be explained as being a return to pre-COVID levels (and due to addressing backlogs from COVID).

A quarter of households who make homeless applications include children. 2021/22 saw the highest number of children in temporary accommodation, although the rapid increase from 2020/21 is due to a return in pre-COVID numbers.³

Timescales are increasing for homelessness cases to be assessed and then closed. The years chosen for comparison by Scottish Government in the publication "Homelessness in Scotland 2021-22" are inconsistent, and need further analysis to determine what the trajectory of timescales are, and how COVID has affected them:

- "It takes an average of 19 days for a homelessness case to be assessed. This is an increase of 3 days compared to 2020/21 but has fallen from 29 days in 2004/05"⁴
- "It takes 256 days on average from assessment to closure for cases assessed as homeless. This is similar to 2020/21 (255 days) but an increase from 225 days in 2019/20"⁵

¹ Harley, Luwam, and Toni, 'Bridging the Gap with Transitional Safeguarding', *Research in Practice* (blog), 12 October 2022, <https://www.researchinpractice.org.uk/children/news-views/2022/october/bridging-the-gap-with-transitional-safeguarding/>.

² 'Homelessness in Scotland 2021-22' (Scottish Government, 18 August 2022), <https://www.gov.scot/publications/homelessness-scotland-2021-22/documents/>.

³ Lucie Dunn, '75 Ways to Prevent Homelessness' (Crisis Scotland, 8 April 2022); Shelter Scotland to Nicola Sturgeon MSP First Minister, 'Emergency Action Plan: Letter to the First Minister', 29 August 2022.

⁴ 'Homelessness in Scotland 2021-22'.

⁵ 'Homelessness in Scotland 2021-22'.

Alongside these figures, there is a decrease in new homes being built, long waiting lists for social housing, and increasing rents in the private sector.⁶

Gaps and Recommendations

Homelessness disproportionately affects young people (ages 16-24); within this population, young women, and care-experienced young people are at higher risk of homelessness or housing instability.⁷ Risk factors for youth homelessness includes: “experience of a range of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), running away, truanting or being excluded from school, or being an LGBTQ+ young person.”⁸ Immediate causes for youth homelessness are primarily related to relationship breakdown, with a root cause of poverty. The demographic most affected by poverty and at “risk of destitution” is “single men aged under 25.”⁹

A significant gap in Scotland’s approach to supporting ‘moving on’ is that the implementation of the prevention pathways for care leavers has been ‘temporarily paused’:

- “Due to capacity challenges, we are focusing on the prevention pathways for women and children experiencing domestic abuse and people leaving prison. This means that implementation of the prevention pathways for care leavers, young people and veterans has been temporarily paused.”¹⁰

Further gaps that have been surfaced include:

- Current pathways do not include all care-experienced young people, but only those who are labelled a ‘looked after child’ on/after their 16th birthday or who are a ‘care leaver’: “Young people who are care experienced or on the edges of care may have similar experiences to care leavers but do not qualify for corporate parenting supports and are considered within the general population”.¹¹
- Homelessness system is the “default response”, and so the ‘system’ is slow to change towards multi-agency working¹²
- Limited data to prove efficacy of interventions, to target populations at risk of homelessness, or to know the true size of the homeless population (e.g. not taking into account “young people staying with friends or families, in unsafe, precarious, or overcrowded housing”).¹³
- Lack of awareness of available support, especially private tenants.¹⁴

⁶ ‘Scottish Housing Emergency Action Plan’ (Shelter Scotland, August 2022).

⁷ Dunn, ‘75 Ways to Prevent Homelessness’; ‘Youth Homelessness Prevention Pathway: For All Young People’ (A Way Home Scotland Coalition, 22 March 2021).

⁸ Dunn, ‘75 Ways to Prevent Homelessness’.

⁹ ‘Youth Homelessness Prevention Pathway: For All Young People’.

¹⁰ ‘Ending Homelessness Together: [COSLA] Annual Report to the Scottish Parliament October 2022’ (Scottish Government: COSLA, October 2022).

¹¹ ‘Youth Homelessness Prevention Pathway: For All Young People’.

¹² Dunn, ‘75 Ways to Prevent Homelessness’.

¹³ Dunn; ‘Youth Homelessness Prevention Pathway: For All Young People’.

¹⁴ Dunn, ‘75 Ways to Prevent Homelessness’.

- Lack of local support and housing solutions, which enables individuals and families to be supported in their area (e.g. temporary accommodation).¹⁵
- Need for diverse and tailored solutions, which take into account the varied other factors affecting people at risk of homelessness.¹⁶
- Need for investment in poverty reduction and social housing: “Countries with poverty reduction strategies and strong welfare states have lower rates of child poverty and lower numbers of young people presenting as homeless. Additionally, substantial investments in social housing have proven to drastically reduce homelessness across all age groups.”¹⁷

Engagement Analysis

Engagement materials described the kinds of activities that are being implemented across Scotland in support of this [Plan 21-24](#) action.

Challenges cited include capacity, recruitment and retention challenges in Through care and Aftercare (TCAC) teams. One indication that this had led in some instances to TCAC being de-prioritised by necessity due to the resultant additional pressures added to other children’s social work teams, resulting in inconsistent standards of service for young people. Not clear if this is an isolated example or a wider pattern from the limited information we currently have.

There were indications in the engagement materials that the numbers of young people staying in continuing care ‘placements’ was increasing, as well as the number of active plans aimed at supporting young people into adulthood and independent living. One source indicated that they had seen numbers of young people accessing an aftercare service increase during the pandemic in response to increased hardship and isolation.

Local areas were putting a range of measures in place to address this [Plan 21-24](#) action including:

- programmes to support young people who are transitioning out of children’s homes to enable them to return or to stay longer, and to convert foster care ‘placements’ to supported carer settings for young people who are not yet ready to move to greater independence.
- projects aimed at supporting young people to develop the skills needed to live independently, with help around practical things such as:
 - Ensuring every child leaving care has a digital device, bank account and passport
 - Money management, cooking, shopping, cleaning and home maintenance
 - Providing ‘trial’ flats that support young people to stay for a few weeks to get a better sense of what is involved in independent living and what kinds of support they would like or need to enable them to transition.

¹⁵ Shelter Scotland to Nicola Sturgeon MSP First Minister, ‘Emergency Action Plan: Letter to the First Minister’, 29 August 2022.

¹⁶ ‘COSLA’s Annual Report to the Scottish Parliament 2022’.

¹⁷ ‘Youth Homelessness Prevention Pathway: For All Young People’.

- Some areas were participating in the National House Project, which is aimed at enabling young care experienced people to develop a peer community with others who are also leaving care, and to live together in a home that supports them to develop the skills need to live interdependently and provide one another with practical and emotional supports and skills.
- Support to access education, training and employment opportunities, including:
 - financial support to maintain tenancies whilst working,
 - ensuring support with accessing bursaries and entitlements for accessing further education,
 - ensuring young people had electronic devices,
 - schemes aimed at providing work experience and paid opportunities in the council to build skills and confidence in their transition from education to employment.
 - Practical, emotional and mental wellbeing support
- Some indication of areas attempting to increasing opportunities for young people to be heard and influence how transition and aftercare services designed and improved e.g.
 - deciding the name of new services,
 - a steering group of care experienced young people actively involved in redesigning the referral process and improving housing pathway
 - looking at improving the way formal documents are written to be more accessible and reflective of the young person's views and wants e.g. having a pathway plan, with pathway reviews written in the form of a reflective letter to the young person.

There was one mention of a project put in place to support young people who are not eligible for statutory provision but have been looked after at home or within a children's house prior to their 16th birthday.

Finally, work was also described that involved streamlining processes to make them more seamless and timely, such as appointing coordination roles to work between social work and housing teams, identifying single points of contact within teams, joint multiagency working to create 'one stop shop' style service for young people transitioning out of care and the creation of housing protocols to ensure alignment with the promise and that young people with care experienced were given priority access to housing.

A Good Childhood: Physical intervention

Desktop Analysis

The document analysis coded minimal material to the action “Physical intervention”, and the only source coded was from the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland (CYPCS). This is likely due to limitations of the analysis methodology. The CYPCS raised concerns about consistency in upholding children’s rights and called for mandatory recording and monitoring the use of restraint. The document also addressed restraint as relates to youth justice. However, the criticisms of YOI did not discuss activity from 2022, so is of limited application to this brief.¹

Engagement Analysis

There are ambiguities in the Scottish Government Physical Intervention in Schools guidance, at times suggesting elements of recording are optional. For example, paragraph 98 of the guidance states “it may be helpful for education providers to have an appropriate recording and monitoring process in place to aid the analysis of distressed behaviour” whereas paragraph 100 states “Recording must be completed”. Inconsistencies like these carry real risk to improving any practice and so need to be reviewed to ensure consistency of approach and a clear understanding of what is required and expected.

There is currently no clear training and support plan for teachers and education staff, nor clarification re which regulatory body has responsibility for monitoring the use of seclusion and restraint in schools. If we wait 12 months post implementation of the guidance to review its impact; it will be 2024 until we have evidence of any change, and into 2025 before we have statutory guidance - 8 years since the Children's Commissioner's initial investigation

Training for teachers and education staff, nor have the Scottish Government confirmed which regulatory body has responsibility for monitoring the use of seclusion and restraint in schools and ensuring that staff training is in place to reduce restrictive practice against Scotland’s children.

Where local authorities commission care services, there is not always direct monitoring of restraint and restrictive practices.

There is recognition of the need to change practice.

- Organisations report implementing approaches such as Dyadic Developmental Practice and trauma-informed practice.
- Local areas are developing their own policy and practice to support national delivery.
- Where organisations are reporting that restraint has been eliminated, there is limited information on unintended consequences.
 - For instance, Police intervention.

There is significant concern about the implementation of continuing care and aftercare duties across local authorities, evidenced by CELCIS. The Scottish Government is working on a number of different initiatives, including the care leavers grant. Who Cares? Scotland and others are supporting calls for

¹ 'Report of the Children's Commissioners: Examination of the Combined Sixth and Seventh Periodic Reports'.

continuing care to be extended and others have called for care experience to be included as a protected characteristic.

Promise Partnership Project set out to support other organisations to reflect on their use of restraint as well as to challenge and change their practices and cultures around restraint.

Collaboration between Aberlour and Kibble with 4 pilot areas: two local authority residential teams, one local authority secure services team and a residential school. Each of the 4 pilot organisation have a set up a project team that is made up of at least three of their team members and a dedicated support team from Aberlour & Kibble (consisting of senior strategic practitioners, operational managers, learning & development staff and project workers.)

Each team has begun creating & developed blueprints for service redesign projects that aim to reflect on their use of restraint and to challenge & change their practices and cultures around restraint. The project will:

- Create route maps that detail the stages & processes the partners undertook to change practice and culture and how they aim to maintain this shift
- share successful approaches with other providers, offering route maps, training, mentoring and peer support to help change culture and practice.
- offer consultancy & developmental support to the 4 pilot organisations including workshops, data reviews, training, mentoring (senior and frontline staff) and psychological support.
- support effective implementation / adapting blueprints for each of the 4 pilot organisations.
- to host steering / board group for each of the pilot organisations
- create a blueprint / toolkit that can be scaled and used in other organisations to support journeys to reduce and work towards eliminating the use of restraint.

Whole Family Support: Family support

Desktop Analysis

Analysis for 'Family Support' turned up information from the Improvement Service, COSLA, and the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland (CYPCS) discussing what had been done in 2022, but gaps and recommendations were surfaced entirely from the CYPCS.

The Improvement Service highlighted the continued expansion of its Shaping Places for Wellbeing initiative, in partnership with Public Health Scotland (PHS), which now supports six towns. The intent of the initiative is to: "improve Scotland's wellbeing and reduce inequalities by changing our approaches to the places where we live, work and play and delivering preventative interventions that reduce Scotland's significant health inequalities".¹ The Improvement service also discussed their work on Embedding Domestic Abuse Informed Systems project, in partnership with the Safe and Together Institute, and the creation of the National Safe and Together Implementation Forum, to "regularly bring together representatives from local authorities across Scotland to help them to implement the Safe and Together model in a high quality and sustainable way".²

COSLA more generally stated that: "Local Government supports individuals and families through focussing on the realisation of human rights and tackling poverty and inequalities, particularly where the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Cost-of-Living crisis is impacting negatively on their life opportunities and chances".³

CYPCS highlighted Scotland's implementation of 2020's statutory guidance on early learning and childcare (ELC), which provides funded ELC to: "all three to four-year-olds and some two-year-olds. This is equivalent to 30 hours a week during term time or 22 hours a week if taken year-round".⁴ CYPCS also surfaced areas of gaps and included recommendations for Scottish Government.⁵ These included: devolved benefits do not have broader eligibility criteria than UK benefits; Scottish Child Payment (SCP) needs to be increased in line with inflation; the Scottish Welfare Fund could be used to mitigate the effects of the cost of living crisis; there's a need to address shortage of social housing; food insecurity continues to be a serious problem, and food bank use in Scotland is higher than the national average; and a need to ensure that mother-and-baby units are sufficient for users.

Engagement Analysis

There was a large amount of engagement material that relates to this cross-cutting [Plan 21-24](#) action. Whole family support and approaches featured heavily in strategic documents and plans, including efforts to:

¹ Sarah Gadsden, '2022 In Review - Improvement Service Highlights', *Improvement Service* (blog), 7 December 2022, <https://www.improvementservice.org.uk/insights/2022/2022-in-review-improvement-service-highlights>.

² Morrison and Gadsden, 'Improvement Service Annual Report 2021'.

³ 'COSLA Plan 2022-2027: Our Vision and Priorities for Local Government and Communities across Scotland' (COSLA, 21 October 2022), https://www.cosla.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0024/39354/COSLA-Plan-2022-2027.pdf.

⁴ 'Report of the Children's Commissioners: Examination of the Combined Sixth and Seventh Periodic Reports'.

⁵ 'Report of the Children's Commissioners: Examination of the Combined Sixth and Seventh Periodic Reports'.

- create new, or strengthen existing multi-agency partnership arrangements to ensure services feel integrated to families and can offer a range of supports that respond to their needs
- shift resources into early support and prevention, and away from crisis intervention
- ensure families are involved in decisions about their lives and in designing services that meet their needs and
- create 'one stop' or 'hub' style places in communities, where families can go to access a range of different supports they might need.

Many acknowledged the challenge of moving to a new model of boosting universal and early support, whilst continuing to deliver support for families who are in crisis, but also recognised the shift as being of fundamental importance to keeping the promise; that it would require time and 'whole system thinking'. Other challenges to embedding the ten family support principles were highlighted, such as the geography and remoteness of some rural communities, or high proportions of children with disabilities or additional support needs in some areas, making it difficult to ensure there are the quantity and range of services that families need to thrive in every community.

The rest of this summary information has been organised against the ten principles of family support that are set out in the promise, to give a sense of some of the relevant activities that are described in the engagement material.

Community Based

The engagement material contained descriptions of a number of projects that were based on the principle of providing local, wrap-around support in the neighbourhoods or localities where families live. These hubs or centres offered a range of practical and wellbeing-focused services all in one place, as well as more specialist services for families living with addiction or experiencing poverty.

Responsive and timely

Some mention was made in the engagement materials of the importance of ensuring support services are available to families at the times and places that they need them, and beyond the 'system-centric' Monday to Friday, 9 to 5 model that is predominant. There were also mentions of improvements made with the explicit intention of improving the timeliness of responses to families in crisis

Work with family assets

Supports such as Family Group Decision Making were being adopted in some areas to ensure that families are acknowledged as experts in their own lives, and that planning and assessment explicitly builds on families' strengths and assets. There was also recognition of the benefits of maximising community assets and community-based relationships as pathways to support.

Empowerment and agency

In addition to the above, some areas described the adoption of new models or approaches to assessment and planning aimed at shifting away from the predominant culture of professionals defining families' problems and deciding what is required to solve them, and empowering families to be at the centre of and take the lead in assessing their own needs, decision-making, and planning.

Flexible

A lot of the engagement material described ways in which efforts are being made to improve the range of supports available to families to try to ensure that services respond to families' needs and not the other way around. In some cases, this involved either the virtual or physical co-location of different services and professionals into single teams or services, or work to improve assessment and triage to deliver the right service at the right time through digital referral platforms. There was also some mention of Human Economic Cost Modelling to support better strategic needs assessment and commissioning that was more responsive to local family need.

Holistic and relational

In addition to the community-based offer described above, there were also programmes that provided support to families through a single allocated support worker, who is in turn supported by a multiagency team of workers, enabling the family to access a range of services and tailored support, through a single, main worker, as well as 'no wrong door' approaches that ensured close partnership working to respond to needs, rather than requiring families to make multiple visits or enquiries to different services. There was also a project described that is shaped by families themselves and based on existing relationships within communities acting as the doorway into support.

Therapeutic

A wide range of trauma-responsive, therapeutic services for families were mentioned in the engagement materials, including Family Functional Therapy, family counselling, anxiety management, supported play, family learning, speech and language therapy, a wider range of wellbeing-focused services including supports for parents through pregnancy, birth and early years, teenagers, fathers as well as recreational activities and personalised support for people with high levels of support need. Training around trauma-informed practice and approaches also featured frequently.

Non-stigmatising

There were some explicit mentions of work to ensure that families were able to easily access and identify services without the use of branding that could be negative or stigmatising, as well as broader recognition that creating a range of different supports and services for all families helps to build understanding that everyone needs extra support from time to time.

Patient and persistent

There were some who stated commitment to the principle that support must be based on need and that must move away from limiting support to set periods of time. Long term change and intensive support take time, and services must be patient in working with families where there are complex, challenging circumstances.

Underpinned by children's rights

Although many organisations recognised that Children's Rights needed to underpin all services, there were few concrete examples of what this looked like in practice.

Whole Family Support: Peer and community support

Desktop Analysis

No information from the analysis was coded to the action 'Peer and Community Support'. This is likely due to analysis being limited to only 20 documents from 14 sources (see methodology for more information about the documents included). As such, a lack of information in this appendix should not assume lack of activity in Scotland.

Engagement Analysis

There were many references to the provision of local, community-based supports for families in the engagement material.

A recurring theme was the creation of hub-style services, based on the principle of providing local, wrap-around support in the neighbourhoods where families live. These hubs or centres offered a range of practical and wellbeing-focused services all in one place, as well as more specialist services for families living with addiction or experiencing poverty. Specifically, services referenced in the engagement material included:

- early, preventative and strengths-based support services for parents and young children, including help for expectant parents, for single parents, breastfeeding, supported family play and activities.
- Services aimed at income maximisation and alleviating the impacts of poverty through ensuring families are in receipt of all the financial support they are entitled to, grants for purchasing essential items, electronic devices, food, clothing.
- Community outreach workers to connect families into a range of health and social services, as well as closer partnership working between different agencies to improve referral processes and signposting.
- Greater emphasis on single point of contact type models, that enable trusting relationships to be built and reduce the need for families to have multiple professionals in their lives all at once.
- Some examples of services that built on existing peer relationships within communities as the basis for providing support and signposting to services that can help.

There had also been some mentions made of work to better understand and map the availability of community-based services and gaps in provision.

Some references were made to some positive side effects of the pandemic, in terms of strengthened links between statutory and community services, and the children and families they serve, including better and quicker signposting into services for families needing help, families successfully supported within their own communities without formal social work referrals and a reduction in social isolation, particularly for older people.

Whole Family Support: Service integration

Desktop Analysis

Limited information from the Care Inspectorate and COSLA was coded to 'Service Integration', and content was more focused on intentions, rather than progress:

- "The pandemic has highlighted the interdependencies across health, social care, social work and education and the need for system-wide approach. Healthcare, social care, social work and early learning and childcare all bring value and unique benefits and there must be a shared understanding of each sector and the issues and risks each face".¹
- "Improve the Wellbeing of Individuals, Families & Communities: Local Government develops sustainable outcome-focused services with support for wellbeing at the core. Any services provided by the National Care Service are subject to local democratic control, enhance local outcomes and focus on the needs of local people".²

Engagement Analysis

There was less engagement material that explicitly addressed this plan 21-24 action than most others, however there are examples of programmes and projects aimed at ensuring services are experienced as more integrated by children and families under several other action areas, particularly whole family support and peer and community support, where there are many descriptions of work to create 'wrap around' services, 'no wrong door' approaches and 'hub' style or 'one stop shop' services for families.

Of the material that was analysed for this topic, there were predominantly descriptions of efforts to create and strengthen multi-agency partnerships and service integration at a strategic level and in documents such as Children's Services Plans. Some explicitly referenced the aim as being to ensure that services would 'feel more integrated' for families and that they 'do not become overwhelmed by the range of services/professionals working with them'. However, many did not place an emphasis on this, and the final impact was inferred rather than stated- it was unclear whether or how steps were being taken to ensure that work at strategic level to align priorities and join up resources, were having a positive impact on how services *feel* to families. This echoes some of the findings around data mapping and collection, where there was not much said about how data, information or evidence about experiences were being or planned to be collected.

Some acknowledged that this was an area that needed to be improved, as services did not always work effectively together in partnership.

Where explicit mention was made of the intent to ensure services are experienced as integrated, the following kinds of activity were described:

- designing clearer pathways for children and families to access supports, to streamline services and 'reduce the scatter gun approach which some families experience'- one example of this was an online digital referral hub designed to

¹ 'Corporate Plan 2022-2025: Care. It's What We Do'.

² 'COSLA Plan 2022-2027: Our Vision and Priorities for Local Government and Communities across Scotland'.

make the process of identifying and accessing the right supports for families quicker and more responsive.

- locality-based, co-located multi-agency teams and pooling of partnership resources to provide more holistic supports.
- as above- 'no wrong door' approaches, 'single point of contact' style workers, 'one worker, one plan', and outreach workers to connect and signpost families into services.

One area highlighted the need to closely monitor and understand the potential impacts of the National Care Service (NCS) on service integration locally and how that will feel to families.

With the potential that children and families social care services will transfer to the NCS, local government is currently in a challenging holding position in relation to the improvement they know is required to #keepthepromise –decisions around investment for improvement are difficult in the context of services that will be transferred in the near future. There is also the wider aspect as Scottish Government position is currently that the NCS is going ahead, and all adult social care services will transfer from local authorities to it – this is a significant change for local government regardless of the decision on the inclusion of children and families.

Work is underway to research the possible implications of and to consult on inclusion of children and families and a decision is expected next year.

Although NCS presents a barrier, there is also agreement that it could also be an opportunity for positive change if done correctly, but much remains unclear as to what this would look like in practice.

Whole Family Support: Family therapies

Desktop Analysis

No information from the analysis was coded to the action 'Family Therapies'. This is likely due to analysis being limited to only 20 documents from 14 sources (see methodology for more information about the documents included). As such, a lack of information in this appendix should not assume lack of activity in Scotland.

Engagement Analysis

There was less information on the 'Family Therapies' plan 21-24 action in the engagement materials that were analysed, than there was for most other actions. Much of this was due to the topic not having been a specific theme or focus of engagement discussions so far, however there was some evidence that there may also be a need to more clearly define this action and what sorts of activities and outcomes could most usefully be captured in order to understand progress toward #KeepThePromise.

Several organisations noted that they needed to have a better understanding of what range of supports were available to families, how these were accessed, gaps, and demand versus capacity in order to ensure there were clear pathways in place for people to access support. In at least one area there had been a review of mental health services undertaken. There was also recognition that there is insufficient mental health supports available to families and more resources would need to be identified.

Where the topic had been discussed, organisations described a range of supports that had been put in place with the aim of providing support to the families of children with care experience and other families in need of additional support, such as:

- Staff trained in various forms of supportive and/or therapeutic practices such as trauma-informed practice, Dyadic Developmental Practice (draws on what is known about trauma and attachment to support relationships).
- Commissioning specialist intensive family therapeutic services such as Family Functional Therapy or support programmes for parents such as 'Incredible Years', 'First Steps', programmes for dads and male carers, for parents of teenagers, breastfeeding support and 'Triple P' parenting programme.
- Specialist supports for families living with mental health, learning difficulties, disabilities, domestic abuse and addiction.
- Other programmes delivering supports to families such as:
 - Family Group Decision Making to support families to design their own plan of care, facilitated by an independent worker,
 - Support for bereavement and loss,
 - sleep counselling,
 - supported play
 - anxiety and stress management
 - Money Advice Services and vouchers and grants for families in crisis, particularly during COVID to assist with purchasing of food, utilities, travel and other essential items

There was also evidence of work to improve the accessibility of services to families by ensuring clearer signposting or 'hub' style teams to facilitate 'no wrong door' approaches, as well as efforts to improve multi-agency joint working to provide timely and appropriate support to families.

DRAFT

Supporting the Workforce: Workforce values

Desktop Analysis

Only two quotes were coded to 'Workforce Values'. However, this is likely an instance where lack of information in this appendix should not assume lack of activity in Scotland and gaps most likely can be explained by the limited analysis carried out. Both quotes are included below, in their entirety:

- SCRA: "We also assessed SCRA's Partnership Approach against the Scottish Government's Fair Work in Public Bodies principles, noting that we are performing well in these areas".¹
- Care Inspectorate: "Our workforce will be skilled, motivated and diverse and we will attract, develop and retain the right people and expertise to deliver our strategic priorities".²

Engagement Analysis

SSSC are leading a wholesale review of the social work and social care codes of practice and aiming to embed the promise in workforce standards. They are engaging across the sector on this work. They have been commissioned by Scottish Government to review the Common Core Framework for the children's social care workforce. The review will be launched by April 2024 and are committed to mainstreaming the promise into workforce standards, training and support.

SSSC only inspect in relation to social care workforce and therefore in relation to multi agency partnerships they can only operate on a stakeholder basis, which they have identified as a potential current barrier that needs addressing. Additionally, whilst the codes of practice are important, they are a limited part of workforce support and standards and are influenced primarily by need for ongoing supervision. Overall workforce capacity, recruitment and retention, pay and conditions are therefore likely to be more impactful than the codes of practice review.

There is limited information about this [Plan 21-24](#) action in the local engagement materials, in part due to this not being a focus of discussion for every organisation, nor an explicit focus for many of the documents analysed (Children's Services Plans, Corporate Parenting Plans, Child Poverty Action Plans).

Some challenges were highlighted by local authorities around staff recruitment and retention, as well as some wellbeing and morale concerns about staff in the wake of the pandemic, but there were very few specific references to values-based recruitment.

One mention was made about the local Champion's Board being involved in the recruitment of all staff who have responsibility for children, young people and their families.

There were also some very limited references to developing a set of core competencies and values for staff, based on the SSSC Common Core of Skills, Knowledge and Values.

There were references to staff development to support shared values rooted in the promise, which included activities such as:

¹ 'SCRA Annual Report 2021/22'.

² 'Corporate Plan 2022-2025: Care. It's What We Do'.

- multi-agency workforce training and awareness-raising sessions on the promise, trauma-informed practice, nurture, relationships and strengths-based practice, and children's rights.
- work to develop shared values and language in leadership, strategic and partnership spaces as well as through core competencies for staff as mentioned above.

DRAFT

Supporting the Workforce: Trauma informed

Desktop Analysis

Information surfaced about the topic 'trauma-informed' was generally unspecific regarding progress.

The Care Inspectorate highlight their six workstreams to #keepthepromise, which includes developing their own workforce to be trauma-informed, but the Corporate Plan did not expand on the details of how this would be achieved.¹ Similarly, the Improvement Service referenced their Protecting People Team, as "continu[ing] to support local authorities and their community planning partners in strengthening their capacity and capability in embedding a trauma-informed approach across services, systems and workforces", but did not include further information about the team or their approach.²

Lastly, an article from Research in Practice highlighted the need for the workforce who are supporting Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) to "learn about the background of each young person, become more trauma-informed and expand their knowledge to develop these relationships, allowing that young person to feel safe and able to talk to [their worker]".³

Engagement Analysis

Trauma- informed approaches was a common theme across the engagement material, most especially in relation to staff being trained to be 'trauma-informed'.

The engagement material contains very few references to the challenges associated with delivering this action area, but there was one organisation that acknowledged that awareness of trauma and its impacts was not yet as widespread outside of children's services as it needed to be. There was also reference to the lack of evaluation of the impact of staff training as an issue that needed to be addressed, as well as insufficient CAHMS support for either emerging needs or for the possible long-term impacts of trauma.

Only one reference was found in the engagement materials to support being provided to staff to manage the impact of possible vicarious trauma through access to psychological support and high quality reflective and clinical supervision.

Staff training was by far the most commonly mentioned activity in relation to this plan 21-24 action, with many organisations explicitly linking local activity to NES National Trauma Training Framework (NTTF), and ambitions to ensure all of the workforce have undertaken the appropriate level of training. Regarding staff training, mention was made of:

- Staff utilising online learning materials through e-platform TURAS,
- the use of resources such as the film 'Resilience: the biology of stress and the science of hope', 'Paper Tigers',
- more specialist training for staff in specific roles, such as:
 - the NTTF Scottish Trauma Informed Leaders Training (STILT) leadership training

¹ 'Corporate Plan 2022-2025: Care. It's What We Do'.

² Morrison and Gadsden, 'Improvement Service Annual Report 2021'.

³ Harley, Luwam, and Toni, 'Bridging the Gap with Transitional Safeguarding'.

- Dyadic Developmental Practice (DDP) training for staff working in children's homes. (DDP is a therapeutic approach to supporting children to recover from trauma, underpinned by understandings of attachment that supports parents and workers to challenge difficult behaviours whilst remaining emotionally connected to the child.)
- Linked to DDP, Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy (PACE) training
- Efforts to ensure trauma-informed practice training extends beyond 'core' children's services workforce and to colleagues in housing, police, libraries, schools etc.
- The creation of online digital 'knowledge hub' style resources for staff to access resources, connect and share ideas, information and learning.

Beyond staff training, there were some examples of other activities aimed at embedding trauma informed approaches into practice such as:

- The creation of posts to champion trauma-informed approaches across organisations by raising awareness, ensuring trauma-informed approaches are given consideration across all aspects of service delivery and sharing best practice across different teams and organisations.
- Consideration of environments (for example the redesign of police offices) and language as part of wider efforts to provide trauma-informed services (though there was very little detail on what this entailed).
- One example of a project to develop trauma-informed investigative interviews that involve police working alongside specialist support workers for children who are witnesses.

Supporting the Workforce: Ongoing relationships

Desktop Analysis

No information from the analysis was coded to the action 'Ongoing Relationships'. This is likely due to analysis being limited to only 20 documents from 14 sources (see methodology for more information about the documents included). As such, a lack of information in this appendix should not assume lack of activity in Scotland.

Engagement Analysis

There is limited information about this plan 21-24 action in the engagement materials, in part due to this not being a focus of discussion for every organisation, nor an explicit focus for many of the documents analysed (Children's Services Plans, Corporate Parenting Plans, Child Poverty Action Plans). More focus was given to discussion of whole family support, making sure children can stay in touch with people that matter to them in the context of family and friends, or staying with brothers and sisters, than there was specifically on supporting ongoing relationships in the workforce.

There were references made to this [Plan 21-24](#) action giving 'permission' and having a positive impact on workforce culture around relationships, however it was also acknowledged that this can be very challenging to evaluate.

Where there was specific mention of this topic, organisations described:

- A children's home where practice had been praised by the Care Inspectorate for the quality of the relationships between staff and children, even after they had moved on, when staff continued to offer practical and emotional support.
- Carrying out a review of all relevant policies to ensure there were no blanket policies that prevent the maintenance of relationships.
- Promoting flexible working in the workforce to support better relationships-based practice.
- Implementation of Life Long Links in several areas, which is an approach aimed at supporting and sustaining meaningful relationships and to re-establish connections with people that are important to children, including social workers or workers from other parts of their life.
- Ensuring children's plans capture what has been done about ensuring they can sustain relationships with people that matter to them.
- Training and support for carers around how to sustain relationships that matter to the children they care for.
- A positive shift in culture around relationships, of commitment to promoting culture that values relationships between the workforce and children, young people and their families, of understanding the risk posed to children by not having loving, sustained relationships, and the difference and impact that positive relationships between staff and families can have.

Supporting the Workforce: Workforce support

Desktop Analysis

Analysis surfaced information on current support from SCRA, Care Inspectorate, CHS, Improvement Service, and Children in Scotland, and gaps from the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland (CYPCS) and Coalition of Care and Support Providers in Scotland (CCPS). Focuses in the area workforce support include staff wellbeing, staff training and capability, and provision of support for other organisations' staff. As the documents primarily discussed ways each organisation is supporting their own workforce, the findings are presented by organisation.

Current Support (2022)

SCRA described its work in 2021/22 as defined by the pandemic, and the workforce support offered included FAQ updates, risk assessments (for those returning to the office), and face-to-face Hearings.¹ It also highlighted its focus on wellbeing, including a brochure with information and support,² and its development and implementation of "mandatory training on the new legislation for all reporters and assistant reporters."³ SCRA's business plan underlines these commitments and introduces a "Wellness Action Plans for staff to use, and for them to be supported to discuss any issues of wellbeing with their manager. The ongoing focus of promoting awareness and understanding of issues relating to staff stress, mood, emotion and psychological functioning is part of our long-term plan to reduce stigma and develop effective preventative interventions and support for staff".⁴

The Care Inspectorate's Corporate Plan and Impact Report include aims they have both for their staff and for their approach to staff support. This includes a focus on skillset and capability: "Our staff will have with the right skills, knowledge and experience to confidently and consistently use their professional judgement to support the delivery of our strategic outcomes and ultimately the delivery of high-quality care and support for those who need it",⁵ as well as a focus on wellbeing.⁶ The Impact Report also describes a commitment to: "champion our workforce and share their expertise and achievements widely both internally and across the sector supporting continuous quality improvement."⁷

CHS highlighted how they pivoted to deliver training via virtual learning in 2021-22 and continued their accredited qualifications programme.⁸

The Improvement Service discusses workforce support for its own staff, as well as ways it is supporting other organisations. Much of the actions taken to support its own workforce is regarding staff wellbeing, including sessions with Mental Health First Aiders, being a Living Wage Employer, and operating both a Mental Health and Wellbeing SharePoint site and a Wellbeing Teams Channel.⁹ Additionally, its annual report highlights the support provided in "the development of skills and

¹ 'SCRA Annual Report 2021/22'.

² 'SCRA Annual Report 2021/22'.

³ 'SCRA Annual Report 2021/22'.

⁴ 'Scottish Children's Reporter Administration Business Plan 2021-2022' (Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA), June 2022).

⁵ 'Corporate Plan 2022-2025: Care. It's What We Do'.

⁶ 'Corporate Plan 2022-2025: Care. It's What We Do'.

⁷ 'Corporate Plan 2022-2025: Care. It's What We Do'.

⁸ 'Impact Report 2021-22'.

⁹ Morrison and Gadsden, 'Improvement Service Annual Report 2021'.

capabilities in the Local Government workforce through the provision of training in a range of areas, and through skills transfer by working directly with local authority colleagues. In some cases (e.g. planning), we provide training to all councils, which reduces duplication and is more cost-effective than each local authority sourcing training separately.”¹⁰

Children in Scotland’s focus was on supporting the wider workforce. Its annual report highlighted its learning and events programme, which “encompasses commissioned training, webinars covering a wide range of themes and issues and our eLearning hub”.¹¹ Alongside this, it also provides “bespoke training” for organisations requiring support and learning.

Gaps

CYPCS focused on gaps in workforce support and training. It underlined the need for professional training to implement, in the Hearings space, “proper support from both independent advocacy and qualified legal advice”.¹² In education, it highlighted two needs: (1) for teacher training for anti-racism in school curriculum, and (2) for making classroom and pupil support assistants subject to statutory registration (e.g. Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) scheme) and ongoing training.¹³

Lastly, the CCPS wrote a “Winter Manifesto”, published November 2022, which included four ways to support third-sector social care and support providers: “(1) By the end of November, confirm parity in pay uplift with the public sector for ALL third sector social care staff in commissioned services – children and adult services, whether or not registered with the Care Inspectorate – with an immediate uplift based on 100% of contract value. This needs a clear timetable for when social care staff will see this in their pay packets; (2) Match any temporary uplifts in staff mileage given to public sector colleagues. Suspend SSSC fees, in line with the offer to local government employees, for all third sector social care staff; (3) Stop all recruitment campaigns which encourage social care trainees or staff to leave social care for other public sector services; (4) Re-open the wellbeing fund to all third sector providers through Inspiring Scotland. Fund providers for at least one day of non-frontline time per full time staff member between now and March so they can take part in wellbeing activity in their organisation.”¹⁴

Engagement Analysis

There is limited information about this [Plan 21-24](#) action in the engagement materials, in part due to this not being a focus of discussion for every organisation, nor an explicit focus for many of the documents analysed (Children’s Services Plans, Corporate Parenting Plans, Child Poverty Action Plans).

Nevertheless, a number of issues and challenges were surfaced in relation to workforce support in some areas, including:

- Workforce fatigue, low morale and high levels of sickness, especially post pandemic

¹⁰ Morrison and Gadsden.

¹¹ ‘The Year 2021-22 in Numbers’.

¹² ‘Report of the Children’s Commissioners: Examination of the Combined Sixth and Seventh Periodic Reports’.

¹³ ‘Report of the Children’s Commissioners: Examination of the Combined Sixth and Seventh Periodic Reports’.

¹⁴ ‘Urgent Action for Urgent Times: A Winter Manifesto’ (Coalition of Care and Support Providers in Scotland (CCPS), November 2022), <https://www.ccpscotland.org/our-work/social-care-pressures/>.

- Difficulties recruiting and retaining staff.
- 'Change fatigue' after successive waves of policy, practice and implementation changes.
- Acknowledgement that often, managers and practitioners are asked to enact policy or legislation without describing how this can be undertaken, which leads to variation and inconsistency in the services children and families receive.
- Impacts of the pandemic on partnership work and relationships with third sector organisations (one organisation said a 'them and us' rhetoric had developed in some partnerships).
- Infrastructural challenges such as lack of appropriate workspace and IT equipment.
- Sense of 'being done to' rather than 'doing with'.
- Challenges of collectively holding risk across services
- Lack of awareness or bandwidth to connect with the promise

There was also a specific issue raised relating to this [Plan 21-24](#) action, in that it mentions 'high-quality supervision', yet supervision has a largely social work context and does not reflect the culture and practice of all organisations involved in the lives of children and families across partnerships e.g. police, education, housing etc.

Whilst there appeared to be broad commitment to supporting the workforce in line with plan 21-24, there were very few tangible examples of how this was being approached. Much of the material that referenced supporting the workforce had an emphasis on training as a way to increase and develop skills, knowledge and confidence, however there were much fewer examples of how staff were being supported in respect of the specifics of this plan 21-24 action. Trauma informed practice training was also notably mentioned often in the context of workforce support; however, this was almost always in the context of how this would improve support for children and families, rather than how it might also benefit staff wellbeing specifically.

There were some notable examples of activity that did explicitly tackle workforce support as outlined in [Plan 21-24](#):

- commissioned software to better meet the operational needs of staff, relieving some time pressure due to improved efficiency and increasing the ability of staff to work flexibly, which was also noted as being a strength also in terms of supporting relational and responsive practice.
- raising awareness of support services available to staff, including services aimed at alleviating poverty for public sector workers
- one example of project to develop and implement a co-designed nurture policy, designed with staff, aimed at supporting those working with children and families to develop positive, supportive and nurturing relationships, and opportunities for nurturing experiences with a view to help workers be able to

support and connect with children, young people and families in positive nurturing ways that benefit them too.¹⁵

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¹⁵ <http://relationshipsfirst.net/1437-2/hug-in-mug>

Planning: Planning

Desktop Analysis

Analysis coded material from the Improvement Service to the action 'planning'. Lack of information from other sources is likely due to limited analysis, rather than reflective of lack of activity in Scotland. The Improvement Service discussed planning primarily in terms of local authorities:

- "This year, the Improvement Service also launched the Authentic Voice: Embedding Lived Experience in Scotland project in partnership with SafeLives and Resilience Learning Partnership. The project aims to help ensure that local authorities and other community planning partners have the knowledge, confidence, and tools they need to embed survivor voice into local system and service design processes in a robust, trauma informed and meaningful way".¹
- "We provide a range of data and intelligence to help support effective decision making, scrutiny, improvement, and public transparency within Local Government as a sector and within individual local authorities. This includes delivering the Local Government Benchmarking Framework".²
- "We facilitate a range of self-assessment and improvement planning work, which helps councils' evidence Best Value and improvement activity to inspection bodies such as the Accounts Commission".³

Engagement Analysis

There is limited information about this plan 21-24 action in the engagement materials, in part due to this not being a focus of discussion for every organisation. However, it also appears that this area may require further definition, expanding on what the Care Review heard about planning, and what sorts of activity might demonstrate progress in this area, in order to support a clear understanding of what the issues are and what 'good' looks like.

Organisations that did reference planning highlighted work they were doing to ensure more children remain both within their families, but also to reduce and remove the need for children to live outside the local authority area and to ensure children stay near their families, schools and communities. This included efforts to:

- Increase preventative and holistic support to families through intensive support in the home, or 'hub' or 'one stop shop' type models.
- Create additional capacity in the local area, shifting expenditure on out of area 'placements' to the creation of new local services (some challenges were noted in respect of registering new services with the Care inspectorate).
- Drives to recruit more local foster carers and to provide 'step up, step down' supports to families and foster families to minimise risk of young person being accommodated away from home.

¹ Morrison and Gadsden, 'Improvement Service Annual Report 2021'.

² Morrison and Gadsden.

³ Morrison and Gadsden.

- Streamlining processes to single assessments and plans shared across partners to improve joined up planning.
- Better incorporating voices of children and families in planning through services such as Family Group Decision Making, aimed at helping a child's wider family to come together to agree on a family plan to support that child, before a life-changing decision is made about their future.
- Increasing use of data to support planning around family needs and early intervention.

One specific example of work being undertaken under this action:

“Prevent and Return – [This local authority] is committed to bringing young people in external residential care back to their communities in a planned and safe way and recognises that we need to think creatively about how to achieve this. [The local area] is also committed to preventing further young people from moving to external placements and are introducing a number of early intervention measures as a priority. On 31 March 2021, there were 29 young people in external residential care including one young person in secure care. During the period April 2020 to 31st March 2021 10 young people returned to [the area] from external residential care. ‘Prevent and Return’ is a project that aims to monitor and support the future planning arrangements for all children and young people in external residential care. The project also aims to ensure robust scrutiny arrangements are in place over the care and education arrangements of all young people in external care. One of the main tasks involve co-ordinating the Senior Officer Resource Group. This group has a clear role in tracking and monitoring the plans for all young people aiming to return to [the area]. The project has been successful in that we now have a multi-agency leadership team that has oversight over all the care plans for young people in external residential and there is a strong commitment from all partners to keep children and young people within their schools and community in [the area]. The project also enables the team to make projections and it is anticipated the numbers of young people in external residential should reduce to from 29 on 31st March 2021 to 22 on 31st March 2022”

Planning: Investment

Desktop Analysis

Analysis surfaced information on investment from the Improvement Service, Children in Scotland, the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland (CYPCS), Coalition of Care and Support Providers in Scotland (CCPS), and COSLA. Due to the nature of annual reports (which made up a significant portion of the source material), discussion of investment includes that completed in 2022, as well as future investment plans and current gaps.

2022

Scottish Government has announced an additional £300,000 for the Welfare Advice and Health Partnerships programme, which will provide further healthcare support to rural and island communities.¹

The Improvement Service described the benefits of their core grant as such: “Local Government’s investment of £1.656M in the IS core grant generates a significant financial return. In 2021/22, for every £1 of core grant invested in the Improvement Service, we brought in an additional £6.46 from other specific grants and commercial income to support improvement in Local Government (this excludes the Digital Office for Scottish Local Government income, which sat with the Improvement Service until the Digital Office transferred to COSLA on 31st March 2022 under TUPE regulations).”²

Children in Scotland’s Access to Childcare Fund awarded £1.1 million to “15 childcare providers to make services more accessible and affordable for low-income families, particularly the six identified priority family groups most at risk from living in poverty as set out in the Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan.”³

Gaps

Some gaps highlighted focused on government approaches to funding and making clear the investment landscape. The Improvement Service raised that the government needs to take into account the effects of the cost-of-living crisis regarding investments to combat child poverty.⁴ COSLA also pledge to: “work to ensure that Local Government is funded fairly and has multi-year financial settlements,” in order to bolster financial certainty.⁵ CCPS was similarly concerned with the allocation of funding, asking that the government confirm that the Health and Social Care Partnerships had received the promised £200 million of extra government funding.⁶

The CYPCS raised two specific concerns about budgeting’s effect on children’s rights: (1) That budget cuts at the local authority level negatively impact children through the closure of community spaces (e.g. libraries or recreation) and that “contracting out public services, including in schools, results in limited accountability and transparency” and (2) that, in regards to Bairns’ Hoose, a Child Rights

¹ Morrison and Gadsden.

² Morrison and Gadsden.

³ ‘The Year 2021-22 in Numbers’.

⁴ ‘A Design-Based Approach to Understanding and Tackling Rural Child Poverty: Solution Paper’ (Improvement Service, 7 November 2022).

⁵ ‘COSLA Plan 2022-2027: Our Vision and Priorities for Local Government and Communities across Scotland’.

⁶ ‘Urgent Action for Urgent Times: A Winter Manifesto’.

Impact Assessment (CRIA) needs to be undertaken to ensure how children's rights are upheld in the justice system, and that sustainable funding needs to be established.⁷

Engagement Analysis

There is somewhat limited information in the engagement data about this Plan 21-24 action area. In many instances this was due to this specific priority area not being a focus of engagement discussions.

[The Promise Scotland's](#) 'using the money' workstream engaged with three local authority areas to look at how budgets are currently invested and how, by applying the principles of human and economic cost modelling, they might be invested differently. A total of around £100m was identified across the three local authorities, being invested in children and families in and around the 'care system'. While there were some opportunities identified for different ways of working, there were also significant barriers to using this money differently. The lessons from this work are being used to inform [The Promise Scotland's](#) ongoing work in this area.

There is some evidence in the engagement documents that this [Plan 21-24](#) action may require further definition, expanding on what the [Independent Care Review](#) heard about Investment, and what sorts of activity might demonstrate progress in this area, in order to support a clear understanding of what the issues are and what 'good' looks like.

Of the references that were made to investment, while many reports name specific and quantifiable investment across various promise-related priorities, it is unclear at this stage whether that investment has been considered holistically around families or whether thinking and budgets have been aligned, or whether principles of HECM have been explored or embedded. Some documents certainly stated this is their intended course of action, but it is largely unclear at this stage how that is being implemented.

However, there were some accounts given of work being undertaken to improve services for children and families through the development of new approaches to funding and commissioning such as:

- Investing in early intervention, prevention and universal services that provide family support.
- Investing in new local services aimed at eliminating out of area placements.
- Pooling of partnership funds and resources into single family focused delivery models such as 'family support hubs'.
- Piloting participatory budgeting approaches and greater involvement of those with lived experience in decision making around funding.
- Mapping of existing funds to inform how funds might be shifted toward prevention and early intervention.
- Training of key finance and service staff around Human and Economic Cost Modelling.

One specific example cited in the engagement data:

"The Council has launched a Transforming Services for Children Programme, sponsored by the council's chief executive. The programme was developed following a previous deep dive into historic overspends in Children's Services. One of the findings was that a significant lever for change was to

⁷ 'Report of the Children's Commissioners: Examination of the Combined Sixth and Seventh Periodic Reports'.

reduce demand on the Children's Services, and that this could only be achieved by other services and partners providing effective early intervention un universal services and preventative activities for children and young people and supports for their families. The Programme Board includes representatives with lived experience of the social work system along with senior management from the Council, Police Scotland, HSCP and [the local Volunteer Centre]. The ambition of the programme is to understand the totality of the resources available to support children and families and take a radical, whole system approach to designing and redesigning services in order to deliver targeted, effective services for children, young people and families. The programme will develop, test and rollout of new approaches to service delivery wherever possible using the structure, support and funding being developed in response to The Promise and has already secured funding of £50K."

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Planning: Information sharing

Desktop Analysis

Engagement Analysis

There is very limited information about work specifically focused on this plan 21-24 action area in the engagement data.

Of the few organisations that we do have information about on this topic, some stated that information sharing was an area of strength for them, with practice underpinned by strong leadership, close partnership working and the implementation of guidance such as the GIRFEC practice model, or new software systems that were helping to improve information sharing between partners and providing a clearer picture of the needs of children and families. Some were trying to develop single points of access for referrals that brought together different sources of data and staff from different disciplines to carry out joint screenings or triage, as a way of improving information sharing and timely, holistic support. Others still acknowledged that swift and appropriate sharing of information continues to present challenges and required improvement.

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Building Capacity: Legislation

Desktop Analysis

Information on legislation is very limited from the documents analysed. This is likely because the documents' purpose does not include discussions of legislation. Further analysis that looks specifically at documents relating to legislation is needed.

SCRA mentioned two things related to recent legislation (or implementation):

- "Particularly significant areas of work included: The implementation of new legislation on participation rights and other matters, arising from the Children (Scotland) Act 2020 and related amendments to the rules for children's hearings; The extension of some provisions of the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020; and the implementation of the main sections of the Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Act 2019".¹
- "Two practice directions were published (these ensure Reporters comply with the legislation and are consistent)."²

Engagement Analysis

There is almost no relevant information on this [Plan 21-24](#) action in the engagement documentation reviewed here, other than references to work being undertaken to ensure that the UNCRC is embedded and that there is guidance and procedures in place to support the workforce to ensure the legislation is upheld. There are also a couple of mentions of the 2021 legislation around brothers and sisters that express support for the step but also highlight that there are significant challenges locally in the implementation of the new legislation. There was also mention in the Youth Justice Plan 21-24 analysis (see above) about the Children's Care and Justice Bill and potential resource challenges posed by the incorporation of 16- and 17-year-olds within the hearings system.

¹ 'SCRA Annual Report 2021/22'.

² 'SCRA Annual Report 2021/22'.

Building Capacity: Children's hearing system

Desktop Analysis

Information about the Children's Hearing System came from the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA), the Hearings System Working Group (HSWG), Children's Hearings Scotland (CHS), the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland (CYPCS). Analysis turned up significant detail about the current state of the CHS, future plans, and potential gaps.

First, SCRA's 'Annual Report' provided current statistics and information about the operation of the Children's Hearing System:

- "The percentage of decisions on referrals within 50 working days indicator decreased by 2 percentage points (pp) to 69% from 2020/21. This measure ensures that children and young people are receiving a timely service from SCRA. As would be expected, the continuing pandemic provided particular challenges for Reporters around decision making in terms of capacity due to other demands on their time"¹
- "The scheduling of grounds Hearings within 20 working days of a Reporter decision to arrange a Hearing was down 4pp in the year to 50%. There had to be a strict prioritisation approach to allow the core business of Children's Hearings to continue through the pandemic with reduced availability of Hearing spaces due to social distancing and other constraints".²
- "Short term absence at 1.6% was within the 2% target and was 0.6pp higher than the prior year."³
- "Long term absence at 3.4% was down 0.3pp from the prior year but was still well above the 2% target. There were eight long term absences due to COVID-19 compared to six the year before."⁴

Activities in 2022 were broad, and included: improvements to Hearing rooms⁵ and Hearing centres;⁶ development of improvement plans;⁷ sector agreement "to allow the referral of 16- and 17-year-olds to the Principal Reporter";⁸ continued work by the Children's Hearings Improvement Partnership (CHIP);⁹ progress on redesign;¹⁰ the formation of the Hearings System Working Group;¹¹ and the launch of the CHS Promise Programme.¹²

¹ 'SCRA Annual Report 2021/22'.

² 'SCRA Annual Report 2021/22'.

³ 'SCRA Annual Report 2021/22'.

⁴ 'SCRA Annual Report 2021/22'.

⁵ 'SCRA Annual Report 2021/22'.

⁶ 'SCRA Annual Report 2021/22'.

⁷ 'SCRA Annual Report 2021/22'.

⁸ 'SCRA Annual Report 2021/22'.

⁹ 'Hearings System Working Group Emerging Themes Report: The Journey So Far' (Hearings Systems Working Group, October 2022), <https://thepromise.scot/resources/2022/hearings-system-working-group-emerging-themes-report.pdf>.

¹⁰ 'Hearings System Working Group Emerging Themes Report: The Journey So Far'.

¹¹ 'Impact Report 2021-22'.

¹² 'Impact Report 2021-22'.

CHS and SCRA described the intended outcomes for future improvements and redesign, focusing on improving the experience of children, families, and the workforce;¹³ engaging in cooperation with the wider system;¹⁴ and fulfilling Corporate Plan objectives.¹⁵

Gaps surfaced include themes of participation, prosecution in adult courts, and effects of the pandemic:

- “In Scotland, the Independent Care Review ‘The Promise’, made significant recommendations to improve the care system, including a transformation of services to support children and families, with a focus on early intervention and user-centred systems. Whilst the Children’s Hearings system aims to take a child-centred approach, children continue to report that they are not always adequately supported to participate in hearings. This particularly applies to younger children and older children in conflict with the law”.¹⁶
- “In Scotland, the MACR has now been increased to 12,275 but remains below the internationally minimum acceptable age of 14. Children continue to be prosecuted in adult courts and in particular not all 16- and 17-year-olds in conflict with the law can be referred to a Children’s Hearing.”¹⁷
- “We remain fully committed to deliver our 2020-23 Corporate Plan, but recognise that the impact of the pandemic will shift our timescales for delivering some objectives”.¹⁸

Plans for 2023 and future years:

- CHS has created four themes for specific work in the next year: “Better Protect and Uphold the Rights of Children; Deliver Consistently High-Quality Hearings; Continue to Build an Effective and Empathetic Panel, that is Well-Supported; Be Well-Informed and Influential in our Environment and Communities”.¹⁹ CHS is also extending its Corporate Plan by a year, “to allow time for detailed planning focussed on the redesign of the hearings system to be finalised”.²⁰
- For the HSWG, Phase (3) Design and Decision begins January 2023, with final report to Scottish Government expected in April 2023.²¹
- SCRA plans on providing information and support in an age-appropriate manner;²² developing new digital team;²³ “further developing, embedding and

¹³ ‘CHS Report and Accounts 2021-22’.

¹⁴ ‘CHS Report and Accounts 2021-22’.

¹⁵ ‘Scottish Children’s Reporter Administration Business Plan 2021-2022’.

¹⁶ ‘Report of the Children’s Commissioners: Examination of the Combined Sixth and Seventh Periodic Reports’.

¹⁷ ‘Report of the Children’s Commissioners: Examination of the Combined Sixth and Seventh Periodic Reports’.

¹⁸ ‘Scottish Children’s Reporter Administration Business Plan 2021-2022’.

¹⁹ ‘CHS Report and Accounts 2021-22’.

²⁰ ‘CHS Report and Accounts 2021-22’.

²¹ ‘Hearings System Working Group Emerging Themes Report: The Journey So Far’.

²² ‘SCRA Annual Report 2021/22’.

²³ ‘SCRA Annual Report 2021/22’.

managing our EHRIA [Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessments] process";²⁴ collaborating with other corporate parents;²⁵ prioritising "continued short term incremental quality improvement" alongside long-term changes.²⁶

Engagement Analysis

CHS is a partner and member of the Hearing System Working Group that is overseeing a redesign of the children's hearings system. Its work will conclude with a set of recommendations for Government and organisational change in April 2023.

At CHS there appears to be cross organisational commitment to #KeepThePromise and they are aware that this will likely mean a huge shift in their operational model.

They are concerned about:

- funding being available to facilitate a different approach and structure of decision making.
- managing the volunteering community to make sure the decision-making structure can sustain over the next few years

SCRA are collaborating with CHS both within the redesign work of the HSWG and the CHIP (Children's Hearings Improvement Collaborative) group that is hosted by Scottish Government.

SCRA are concerned about:

- forthcoming budget rounds and implications of cuts.
- The Care and Justice Bill is likely to have an associated cost and will require more Reporters.

The Promise Scotland is working closely with CHS to scope alternative models and to provide a financial price tag to solutions. Insights team are pulling together a commissioning brief so we can get support from auditors to develop a clear cost model for this (and other) work. This work is in progress and under the auspices of the HSWG.

Alongside HSWG, SCRA are pressing on with their promise programme.

They have produced a route map that includes aims:

- Hearings will be inclusive, rights based, and trauma informed.
- Everyone attending Hearings will have the information they need, be prepared and be able to participate.
- The reasons for coming to a Hearing will be clear and explained as will the decisions of the Hearing.
- Rights to appeal will be clear and accessible.
- Everyone in our organisation will work with children and families with kindness.

²⁴ 'Rights, Inclusion and Corporate Parenting Year Report Card' (Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA), 25 October 2022), <https://www.scra.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Report-Card-RICP-1.pdf>.

²⁵ 'Rights, Inclusion and Corporate Parenting Year Report Card'.

²⁶ 'Scottish Children's Reporter Administration Business Plan 2021-2022'.

- The language that we use to talk and to give information will be clear, accessible and appropriate.
- We will be open and constructive in our conversation with partners about how the Children's Hearing can and should change, and we will do all we can to prepare our staff for this change, whilst continuing to improve the current Children's Hearing experience of children and families
- In relation to ongoing improvement work, there is still a concern about how to drive change across organisations.
- The HSWG is a key opportunity to create a new framework and operating model. It has provided a space to take the Kilbrandon principles into the next phase and space.
- The HSWG approach and the redesign project have meant that CHS are not doing this alone but have support and cover from The Promise Scotland and the collective approach more broadly.
- CHS are doing a whole scale engagement and consultation project with the volunteer panel members. This is to explain the redesign work and the HSWG project to them.

There is a need for support post HSWG to keep the momentum and drive the change required.

Local authorities and partners are aware of and in some cases directly involved in the work of the Hearing System Working Group and many areas have stated that they are watching closely and preparing to respond to the outcome of that work. However, many areas are also carrying out local improvement activities in the meantime with the intention of ensuring that locally, children's hearings are a better experience for children and their families. This work includes activities and initiatives such as:

- Local practice forums for identifying and sharing learning around improvement
- Staff training to improve practices, such as writing shorter more accessible reports for hearings
- Creation of accessible age and stage appropriate materials and in one case a digital platform to help children prepare for their hearings
- Ensuring hearings are organised around the needs and preferences of children and young people including ensuring they take place at times or in places that suit young people's preferences, such as virtual hearings from educational establishments
- Broader initiatives that are looking to improve experiences at ALL decision-making meetings including hearings, but also reviews, Team Around The Child, Child's Plan meetings and meetings in school.
- Involving Champions Boards and children and young people with lived experience in training of staff, panel members and in the development and testing of many of the above initiatives

Some practical challenges to local work were highlighted including difficulties with IT systems, lack of appropriate physical spaces to host review meetings and lack of capacity in individual advocacy support.

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Building Capacity: Inspection and regulation

Desktop Analysis

The Care Inspectorate was the only included source that discussed inspection and regulation, in both its “Corporate Plan” and its “Quality Improvement and Involvement Strategy”. Its corporate plan, described current work in inspection:

- “All social care services in Scotland, including early learning and childcare, must be registered with us. We inspect these services, reporting on performance and identifying improvements they need to make. We have powers to enforce change where it is needed. We also investigate and resolve complaints about services. We take an intelligence-led, risk-based and targeted approach to scrutiny, assurance, and quality improvement support. We rigorously monitor services, gathering and analysing intelligence, which helps to target our approaches effectively and efficiently, as well as helping to shape and influence local and national policy and practice”.¹
- “The Care Inspectorate is working to deliver the ambitions set out for us in the Promise Change Programme One 2021-24... Externally, we will be working with our scrutiny partners and national stakeholders to influence and contribute to the development of national practice and the implementation of policy and landscape changes to realise the vision of The Promise.”²

Both documents highlighted future intentions for improvement:

- “We will build upon our flexible, risk and intelligence-led approach to ensure our scrutiny, assurance and quality improvement support activity is risk-based, proportionate and intelligence-led.”³
- “The Care Inspectorate will support the priorities of the National Performance Framework, contribute to reducing health and social care inequalities and empower communities. We support the building of the wellbeing economy where everyone has access to the opportunities they require to support their wellbeing.”⁴
- “Professor Ken Muir’s report to the Scottish Government on education reform will also likely have significant implications. Published in March 2022, it proposes the creation of three national organisations, including a new inspectorate body. The Scottish Government has since consulted on the inspection of early learning and childcare and school age childcare services, to inform how the new

¹ ‘Corporate Plan 2022-2025: Care. It’s What We Do’.

² ‘Corporate Plan 2022-2025: Care. It’s What We Do’.

³ ‘Corporate Plan 2022-2025: Care. It’s What We Do’.

⁴ ‘Corporate Plan 2022-2025: Care. It’s What We Do’.

independent education inspection body will carry out its duties with regard to ELC and seeking views on a shared inspection framework".⁵

- "As we develop a world-class approach to scrutiny and quality improvement, we continue to remain focused on the outcomes for those experiencing care. Collaboration with many different partners is key to bringing different experiences and perspectives to the conversation. Through our joined up strategic approach our vision is for Scotland to have the most advanced system of care scrutiny and quality improvement support in the world that results in better outcomes for those experiencing care."⁶

Engagement Analysis

Along with SSSC, the Care Inspectorate is the main body charged with delivering changes for this action. The promise is one of the big drivers of change for the Care Inspectorate. They have six workstreams aimed at aligning scrutiny practice across service level regulation, strategic inspection and quality improvement, to focus more on making a difference to children's lived experience.

These are:

1. Quality Improvement frameworks, inspection methodology and reporting.
2. Participation, engagement and listening.
3. A common understanding, value base and approach across regulators/scrutiny partners.
4. Equipping our inspection workforce.
5. Building and reporting on the big picture.
6. Proposing, supporting and preparing for legislative, regulatory and landscape change.

The Care Inspectorate has publicly committed to work collaboratively with other external regulators and scrutiny bodies to:

- improve support for care experienced children and young people.
- lower barriers to employment caused by bureaucratic and rules-based approaches to regulation.
- counter discrimination.

The Care Inspectorate's Quality Improvement and Involvement Strategy 2022-2025 was discussed by their Board in August 2022 and states: "The Care Inspectorate has an important contribution to make in keeping The Promise and to do so we will need to make changes to how we approach our scrutiny, assurance and improvement work."

The first two 'internal' workstreams are progressing and there seems to be considerable buy-in from colleagues and scrutiny partners.

⁵ 'Quality Improvement and Involvement Strategy 2022-2025' (Care Inspectorate, November 2022), https://hub.careinspectorate.com/media/5030/quality-improvement-and-involvement-strategy-2022-25.pdf?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery.

⁶ 'Quality Improvement and Involvement Strategy 2022-2025'.

SSSC and the CI are well underway with planning around workstream three and SSSC is taking a lead on refreshing the Common Core (workstream 4). Some concerns were expressed in a meeting in Feb 2022 that there is insufficient recognition that the required changes are as much cultural as task focused.

Workstreams five and six are feeling more challenging, due to the scale and the involvement of other actors beyond the Care Inspectorate (building & reporting on the big picture; proposing, supporting and preparing for legislative, regulatory, landscape change). This was the subject of the meeting with Fiona Duncan and Helen Happer in July 2022.

This will be addressed in part by the current Independent Review of Inspection, Scrutiny and Regulation (IRISR) being chaired by Sue Bruce. A The Promise Scotland representative sits on the practitioner and stakeholder panel and consideration is being given to other ways to influence this review.

The SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT Implementation Plan ask around the holistic governance framework clearly cuts across this piece of work. We are still scoping how The Promise Scotland will be involved with this and how it links to the IRISR and the NCS.

Each Workstream has a lead and reports quarterly (internally). For example, on Workstream One, the children and young people's national team in the CI are using a different approach to inspection in 2022. This includes a review of the quality framework for care homes and school care accommodation. A new key question has been introduced and is designed to:

- produce a more proportionate regulatory footprint, affording services space to focus on recovery and development as we transition out of the pandemic
- 'prioritise the quality of relationships experienced by children, not the process surrounding their care' as advised by the promise
- support engagement with more children and young people, through visiting more services. In our discussions with young people about this revised approach, this was particularly important to them.

Ultimately if the promise is kept, fewer children will come into the regulated care environment. Meanwhile the change will show in enhanced evidence from children, young people, their families, demonstrating a greater focus on children's lived experience.

There is very little local authority information about this plan 21-24 priority in the engagement material, since this action is explicitly a cross-cutting, national-level and most of the engagement material relates to local activity. Where mention is made of anything relating to inspection and regulation, it relates to recent inspection activity in the area and responses to those inspection findings.

There were also a very small number of references to difficulties in registering new services and that this was potentially hampering the ability of those areas to ensure children were being housed close to home.

Building Capacity: Policy coherence

Desktop Analysis

Policy coherence was discussed in documents from the Care Inspectorate, Hearings System Working Group (HSWG), Improvement Service, and the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland (CYPCS).

While HSWG and the Improvement Service highlighted examples of successful policy developments and coherence:

- HSWG: “At present there are a number of significant policy developments happening concurrently in Scotland that impact on the work of The Children’s Hearings System redesign. This includes, the refresh of Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC), the Children’s Care and Justice Bill which, if passed, will raise the maximum age of referral to the Principal Reporter and will likely be laid before Parliament this year, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill and measures to prepare for incorporation across the country; the implementation of recently refreshed National Child Protection Guidance; commitment to ensuring statutory child poverty targets by 2030; commitments to end the placement of 16 and 17 year olds in Young Offenders Institutions; updates on mental health, suicide and self-harm and trauma strategies; changes to secure care; the development of the Youth Justice Vision and Standards; and the development of a Whole Family Wellbeing Fund which has begun to issue funding to local authorities to prioritise early help and support for families”.¹
- Improvement Service: “We add value to the work individual local authorities undertake on elected member development, through the delivery of national briefings, guidance, webinars, workshops, coaching, political mentoring programmes and other learning resources which councils can use locally to help increase members’ knowledge of issues, or which members can use themselves as part of self-directed learning. This includes developing national elected member induction materials and a national Political Skills Framework once for Scotland, reducing duplication of effort and resource”.²

The Care Inspectorate discussed future plans for coherence:

- “We have established six workstreams to help us to achieve these ambitions [from Change Programme One]. Internally, the workstreams span our work on methodology, quality frameworks, reporting, developing our own trauma-informed workforce as well as further strengthening our involvement and participation activities through listening and responding to care-experienced voices. Externally, we will be working with our scrutiny partners and national stakeholders to influence and contribute to the development of national practice

¹ ‘Hearings System Working Group Emerging Themes Report: The Journey So Far’.

² Morrison and Gadsden, ‘Improvement Service Annual Report 2021’.

and the implementation of policy and landscape changes to realise the vision of The Promise".³

- "We will use our data, information and intelligence to proactively shape and influence policy and learning at local and national level, identifying emerging themes and areas of priority. We will challenge policy where we do not feel it is in the best interests of those experiencing social care, social work and early learning services".⁴
- "The strategy should be considered within the context of a complex policy landscape, with notable ongoing and upcoming developments with significant implications for the Care Inspectorate and the services we inspect, regulate and support. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact all areas of the care sector. As this continues, a range of review and reform processes are underway across social care. For example, the Scottish Government's proposals for a National Care Service, following the Feeley review of Adult Social Care in Scotland in 2021, will impact upon the Care Inspectorate's work and the delivery of social care and social work services in Scotland. As the National Care Service is developed and implemented in the coming years this is likely to have a significant impact on social care and social work, with implications for our role and function".⁵

And both the Care Inspectorate and CYPCS surfaced gaps and reiterated the need for coherence:

- Care Inspectorate: "The pandemic has highlighted the interdependencies across health, social care, social work and education and the need for system-wide approach. Healthcare, social care, social work and early learning and childcare all bring value and unique benefits and there must be a shared understanding of each sector and the issues and risks each face".⁶
- "In Scotland, CYPCS was concerned about the lack of timely production of CRIAs during the pandemic, which led to their commissioning an Independent CRIA which highlighted the impacts of the pandemic on children. Although the Scottish Government now publishes details of CRIAs produced on a quarterly basis, CYPCS are concerned they are seldom prepared or published early enough when policy and legislation are developed".⁷

³ 'Corporate Plan 2022-2025: Care. It's What We Do'.

⁴ 'Corporate Plan 2022-2025: Care. It's What We Do'.

⁵ 'Quality Improvement and Involvement Strategy 2022-2025'.

⁶ 'Corporate Plan 2022-2025: Care. It's What We Do'.

⁷ 'Report of the Children's Commissioners: Examination of the Combined Sixth and Seventh Periodic Reports'.

- Additionally, CYPSC was concerned with Scotland not having a “comprehensive underpinning rights-based legal framework”, with gaps in “legal and policy protections for child trafficking victims”.⁸

Engagement Analysis

Overall, there is less engagement information about this plan 21-24 action than there is for most others, with many engagement documents stating that this had either not been a focus of discussion yet, was not seen as relevant for some specific organisations, or was not mentioned explicitly in the documents that were analysed in this iteration of the feedback loop (Children’s Services Plans, Corporate Parenting Plans, Child Poverty Action Plans). In some cases, documents were out of date, or the issue of policy coherence was seen as an action to be led at national level.

There is some evidence in the engagement documents that this Plan 21-24 action may require further definition, expanding on what the Care Review heard about policy coherence, and what sorts of activity might demonstrate progress in this area, in order to support a clear understanding of what the issues are and what ‘good’ looks like.

Where information about policy coherence has been referenced, it has been described in terms of:

- work to ensure different organisations work in partnership structures under the same policies and/or
- work to ensure policies themselves are aligned with other key policies.

Information captured mentions work intended to align plans and policies with one another, particularly the promise, UNCRC and GIRFEC, although the National Performance Framework, Carer’s Act, Children and Young People Scotland Act, Community Empowerment Act and local Child Poverty Action plans are also mentioned.

Additionally, information has been captured about local area intentions to ensure that the voices of children, families and people with care experience are captured in policy making processes via structures such as Champion’s Boards.

Some references to this action stated that there is a recognition that the current cluttered policy landscape was a barrier and a challenge, but these were not always coupled with information about if or how that challenge is or should be approached, suggesting this is an area that some organisations require support with.

⁸ ‘Report of the Children’s Commissioners: Examination of the Combined Sixth and Seventh Periodic Reports’.

Building Capacity: Data mapping and collection

Desktop Analysis

Analysis highlighted two areas that organisations highlight as gaps:

- (1) Gaps in the quality (detail and up to date) of information recorded and reported
 - a. “Local areas believe there is a need for more granular, up to date information on the cost of living in remote rural and island communities to inform policy, resource and service delivery decisions at local level”.¹
 - b. “Public Health Scotland does not publish detailed statistics for paediatric waiting times (with the exception of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) and there is a need to improve both reporting and recording of data”.²
- (2) Gaps in the data landscape being cohesive, rationalised, and consistent
 - a. “The Scottish public sector’s data reporting duties have developed in an ad hoc manner over many years. The reporting and format of data is inconsistent and restricts the ability of public bodies and others to use data to inform policy making. Data on children with additional support needs in education is reported in a way which makes an estimate of the number of disabled children in Scotland impossible”.³

The Improvement Service updates in their annual report that it is working to meet both of these needs (alongside the Digital Office for Scottish Local Government and COSLA) by developing Local Government Data Platform, which “aims to rationalise the current data reporting landscape, simplify data collection, improve quality assurance, and provide richer insight from data currently collected from councils, including Local Government Benchmarking Framework data”.⁴

Engagement Analysis

Much of the engagement feedback from individual organisations in this iteration of the feedback loop, stated that this had not yet been a key topic of discussion. However, COSLA and Improvement Service have been engaging with Local Authority Promise Leads and others, to better understand what data councils feel is needed to be able to support their priorities and monitor progress towards keeping the promise.

There is some evidence in the feedback that this Plan 21-24 action may require further definition, expanding on what the Care Review heard about data challenges, and what sorts of activity might demonstrate progress in this area, in order to support a clear understanding of what the issues are and what ‘good’ looks like.

¹ ‘A Design-Based Approach to Understanding and Tackling Rural Child Poverty: Solution Paper’.

² ‘Report of the Children’s Commissioners: Examination of the Combined Sixth and Seventh Periodic Reports’.

³ ‘Report of the Children’s Commissioners: Examination of the Combined Sixth and Seventh Periodic Reports’.

⁴ Morrison and Gadsden, ‘Improvement Service Annual Report 2021’.

From what has been heard so far, some areas are carrying out their own extensive data mapping and collection activity in order to support service redesign activities, with stated aims including:

- identifying gaps in data
- identifying areas for improvement
- understanding how to better incorporate the voices and experiences of children and young people
- mapping information about local communities to help direct resources and enable proactivity
- identify areas of overlap and difference in services and policies to prevent duplication and maximise use of resources

Whilst most mentions of data relate to the use of quantitative measures of performance and analysis to support planning there was some evidence also of work to develop ways of enriching and supplementing quantitative data with qualitative data:

“Since 2018 the partnership, driven by [the local] CPC and the GIRFEC Strategic group, has analysed qualitative data at escalation points along the children’s service pathway. The IRD (Inter-Agency Referral Discussions) quality assurance group looks at IRD recordings when risk in a case escalates towards a child protection response and the GIRFEC quality assurance group considers the transition from named person to social work services, analysing the assessment, presentation and joint responses to need. The processes provide rich insight and some immediate practice developments have been made alongside planned improvement activity around shared assessment tools, professional guidance and the promotion of comprehensive medicals in cases of neglect.”

About a quarter of local areas stated they wanted support around this action, or had identified it as a significant challenge, as well as a small number who were keen to share their experience of tackling this action with TPS and others.

Some of the challenges identified included:

- difficulties working with large scale and imperfect data
- ensuring collaboration across different organisations
- ensuring lived experience and voice plays a central role in data
- identifying and developing meaningful outcome indicators that relate to what matters to children and families
- lack of ‘real time’ data to drive service delivery e.g., through the pandemic when figures were not current enough to support decision making (although this was also observed to be positive in that this drove higher levels of engagement with people and communities to provide ‘live feedback’ that responds to current needs.).

Building Capacity: Governance structures

Desktop Analysis

Very little surfaced about governance structures in the analysis process. This is likely because the type of included documents were unlikely to include information about this topic. (See methodology for how source documents were chosen).

The Children's Hearing System's accounts stated: "CHS' governance framework accords with generally accepted best practice principles and guidance from Scottish Ministers in the Scottish Public Finance Manual and has been in place for the financial year ended 31 March 2022 and up to the date of the approval of the annual report and accounts".¹

Engagement Analysis

Overall, there is less information through engagement around Governance Structures than there is for most other plan 21-24 actions.

A lot of this appears to be either because it has not been the key focus of conversations thus far, because the topic was not viewed as relevant to some specific organisations, or because the specific documents that have been consulted do not reference governance specifically. There is also mention in some cases of lack of access to senior leaders who would have relevant insights in this topic. However, there may also be a lack of clarity about how to go about finding out and capturing the kind of information that could improve our understanding of this topic, both at the engagement and analysis stages. This Plan 21-24 action may require further definition, expanding on what the care review heard, what sorts of activity would demonstrate progress in this area, in order to support a clear understanding of what the issues are and what 'good' looks like. Some of the documents reviewed were out of date and did not represent the current situation.

Most of the engagement information on this topic describes local governance arrangements and which boards/groups feed into others, what they are responsible for monitoring and scrutinising, as well as information in some cases about the specific priorities of those governance structures in their current plans.

In some cases, there were references to the plan 21-24 action around governance being lead at national level.

However, the information that has been captured would suggest that all organisations recognise the important role played by governance in ensuring effective and accountable shared working, as an integral part of work to #KeepThePromise and are exploring ways to improve existing arrangements.

There are accounts from almost every organisation engaged with about the kinds of activity being undertaken to improve governance structures to align with and ensure accountability for keeping the promise:

- Ensuring and strengthening buy in across partnership governance structures,
- Shifting the policy 'home' of governance structures to leverage greater partner buy in,

¹ 'CHS Report and Accounts 2021-22'.

- Changes to structures and membership,
- Improving awareness of care-related issues to corporate parents such as elected members

One area's information made mention of commissioning an external body to carry out a governance review, and another mentioned changes in governance as part of a wider total service redesign.

There is some recognition in the engagement records and documentation that the current governance landscape is a challenge with many different organisational and policy priority areas needing attention and resources. In a very small number of instances, it was identified that there are governance bodies that are inactive or have not been able to take forward stated intentions around overseeing the delivery of plans, suggesting the need to greater buy-in and prioritisation of the promise.

Difficulties were also highlighted in some instances around changes in senior leadership and ongoing problems with recruitment hampering progress.

DRAFT

Promise Oversight Board

Writing REPORT TWO: Information
sources on Brothers and Sisters

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Notes and Guidance

Content

This document contains information and evidence that the Promise Oversight Board considered when developing Report TWO.

It was compiled by The Promise Scotland at the Promise Oversight Board's request and covers key information and evidence up to and including April 2023. Its content is drawn from engagement The Promise Scotland has undertaken across sectors and organisations, and relevant, published, qualitative and quantitative data and information sources. It does not offer an exhaustive source of information on the theme of brothers and sisters and instead highlights key information and sources for the Promise Oversight Board to refer to as they reach their conclusions on progress for Report TWO.

References are included throughout where applicable.

Language

Where terminology such as 'looked after' appears, this is because it refers to specific data sets that continue to use this wording.

What has already been said

the promise

Where living with their family is not possible, children must stay with their brothers and sisters where safe to do so and belong to a loving home, staying there for as long as needed. There will always be some children who cannot stay with their families. Some will need to be away from their family for a short time, others will never live with their family again while many return later and as young adults

Plan 21-24

Scotland will stop the practice of separating brothers and sisters, unless for reasons of safety. Relationships between brothers and sisters will be cherished and protected across decision making and through the culture and values of the people who care for them.

Change Programme ONE

Work is underway but is not yet sufficient.

Oversight Board Report ONE

Ongoing separation of brothers and sisters continues to be unacceptable. It is also very difficult to know at a national level whether Scotland is keeping its promise to keep brothers and sisters together. Whilst there is local reporting, there is not a coherent national picture of the numbers of children, who despite legislative intent, continue to be separated.

Key work to date

- Legislative change has been established¹, with the intention to:
 - Enhance the legal entitlement of sibling groups to be able to live together, even if they require to live away from their family.
 - Strengthen support for sibling-like relationships, often created by having children live in places where children already reside.
 - Provide clarity on the responsibility of care providers and implementing authorities to support and facilitate meaningful relationships for these children.
- The [Staying Together and Connected National Implementation Group](#) (STAC, chaired by the Scottish Government and [CEL CIS](#)) is due to make recommendations on next steps to support implementation and a rescheduled date for publication of their report is awaited. The group is also leading work to improve data collation and monitoring of implementation of this work which is currently running to a different timescale than [Plan 21-24](#).

¹ <https://www.gov.scot/news/keeping-brothers-and-sisters-together/>

- CHS reforms are considering brothers and sisters, including: “A new duty on a Children’s Hearing to consider the need for a direction about contact with the child’s brothers and sisters”.² Since July 2021, “brothers, sisters, people with brother/sister-like relationships are given new rights in hearings. Within the changes, there was a considerable emphasis placed on Panel Members, as decision-makers within children’s hearings, to consider contact and maintaining brother, sister, and brother/sister-like relationships. We created a new training module for Panel Members, so they understood the changes and what they meant for hearings”.³
- The Care Inspectorate is working as part of the partnership [Stand Up for Siblings](#), to raise awareness of the importance of sibling relationships and to encourage and support practice improvements.⁴
- Among various other activities, the National Implementation Group: STAC’s legal group is exploring a “National Assessment Framework” that “could be used earlier in the process and support a coordinated and consistent approach to help map and understand relationships”.⁵
- “Sisters & Brothers Collective learning event was held in October 2022, hosted by Star, Siblings reunited and partners: [Association for Fostering, Kinship and Adoption \(AFKA\) Scotland](#) and [The Promise Scotland](#).⁶ The learning event surfaced themes of individual approaches, language, values and attitudes, relationships, organisational culture, and workforce support.⁷

² “SCRA Annual Report 2021/22.”

³ “Impact Report 2021-22.”

⁴ “Corporate Plan 2022-2025: Care. It’s What We Do.”

⁵ “National Implementation Group: Staying Together and Connected (Meeting Minutes 2 Nov),” 3.

⁶ “Sisters & Brothers Collective Learning Event at STAR, 14.10.22: Reflections, Themes, Action,” 1.

⁷ “Sisters & Brothers Collective Learning Event at STAR, 14.10.22: Reflections, Themes, Action,” 8.

What has been heard through engagement

Overall, organisations welcomed the legislative changes introduced around brothers and sisters but acknowledged that there are significant challenges and barriers to implementing them.

Some stakeholders have cited the challenge to deliver this change without increased practice capacity or resource despite the universally strong levels of commitment. This includes a lack of resource, including a lack of facilities to support large sibling groups and a shortage of foster carers within the area to avoid children moving outside of the area. Some Authorities have begun to review the availability of 'placements' and continued support considerations.

Specific challenges have been identified on:

- The lack of availability of foster carers who are able or willing to take groups of more than two siblings due to physical space, as well as regulatory issues attached to the care of larger groups of children.
- Providing suitable, flexible spaces and supports for families to spend time together.
- Difficulties in rural areas regarding limited transport links and lack of homes available within close reach of one another.

However, there appeared to be high levels of commitment to this [Plan 21-24](#) action, with a lot of tangible activity underway, including:

- Use of existing data, as well as work to improve data around brothers and sisters to better understand the local picture e.g. knowing how many children were separated, how far away from one another they are living, but also developing the use of more qualitative data such as evidence of children being involved in decision making around their siblings and living arrangements, evidence of plans being put in place to ensure children and young people can keep in touch with those who are important to them, within their plans.
- Staff training on the legislative changes and implications for practice, incorporation of the voice of children and developing understanding of who and what is important to them about living with and spending time with their brothers and sisters and other who are important to them.
- Building in senior leadership ownership and scrutiny over any decisions to separate brothers and sisters, as well as building in processes to ensure children are supported to keep in touch and spend time together in plans and reviews.
- Collaborating with families on developing innovative and flexible spaces that enable families that are separated to spend time together.

- Developing programmes that support children and young people to keep in touch with people that matter to them and to spend time together.
- Drives to recruit more foster carers who are able to look after larger sibling groups.
- Increasing availability of places for children to live within local areas that mean children who have been separated can live closer together.
- Work to support families to stay together and increase the number of children who can be looked after at home or in kinship settings.

Reforms have occurred to the Children’s Hearing system, supporting panel members to fulfil the that a “*Children’s Hearing to consider the need for a direction about contact with the child’s brothers and sisters.*” It is anticipated this will result in greater focus of the team around the child in supporting and enabling brother and sister relationships to thrive.

The use of [family group decision making](#) has been cited by some as a model assisting those responsible with the care and protection of children in working in partnership with families to prioritise brother and sister relationships, despite the current resource and capacity challenges. The use of such models also seeks to increase the number of children and families who continue to be supported whilst they remain at home with their families.

Efforts of implementing authorities to mitigate the current resource and capacity issues impeding on universal implementation include efforts to source and retain more foster care settings with the ability to care for groups of brothers and sisters. The 2022 edition of the [Scottish Journal of Residential Child Care](#) highlighted work of the children’s residential care workforce in maintaining sibling relationships, positive childhood experiences, and provision of support in “delicate circumstances”.⁸

Local authority areas have advised that there have been efforts to provide training to key members of the team around the child for Scotland to be best placed to get it right for brothers and sisters. Some local areas have built in senior leadership ownership and scrutiny over any decisions to separate brothers and sisters, as well as building in processes to ensure children are supported to stay connected and spend time together in plans and reviews.

⁸ Morris, “Seldom Seen Sibling Support: Exploring the Changing Experiences of Siblings in Scottish Residential Childcare Services.”

Desktop analysis

Qualitative information

'Brothers and Sisters' was discussed in the Scottish Journal of Residential Child Care, which highlighted work done by the Residential Care Workforce to ensure sibling contact, positive childhood experiences, and provision of support in "delicate circumstances"⁹:

- "Thinking very carefully about the needs of each child and young person and how best their needs can be met, in the shorter and longer term, involves intricate planning. It may not be possible, or at that time the right thing, for brothers and sisters to live together. It is important that these decisions are kept under review".¹⁰
- "There needs to be real commitment, investment, and energy to make children and young people spending time with their brothers and sisters a reality. There is increasing recognition within residential childcare that time together for brothers and sisters who live apart should be part of fun childhood experiences. Stilted, awkward times spent in social work offices are now much less common. Such experiences are the opposite of having a good childhood. Instead, residential workers are organising fishing trips, outings to the beach, sleepovers, and holidays".¹¹
- "Finding a way for brothers and sisters to keep in touch in delicate circumstances require diplomacy and sometimes tenacity... Social workers may not have the time or desire to navigate and negotiate such scenarios. Skilled and knowledgeable residential workers can help find a way forward, helping to repair and restore fractured relationships. They can work alongside families to provide reassurance and support".¹²
- "Residential work is developing and evolving to ensure that The Promise is kept. Work to support the rights of care experienced brothers and sisters is very much part of keeping The Promise. It would be great if this work was more fully 'seen', recognised, and understood".¹³

⁹ Morris, "Seldom Seen Sibling Support: Exploring the Changing Experiences of Siblings in Scottish Residential Childcare Services."

¹⁰ Morris, 4.

¹¹ Morris, 5.

¹² Morris, 7.

¹³ Morris, 8.

Quantitative information

National

The Care Inspectorate have reported¹⁴ there were no new fostering services registered in 2021 and the total number of fostering households across existing services decreased. The number of foster carers approved has been decreasing for the last 3 years and the number of children coming into foster care exceeds the number of new foster care households in 91% of local authority services. Most services report recruitment challenges with foster carers, with a higher figure reporting specific challenges with recruiting households able to foster family groups. While there is a lack of evidence to explain the cause of this decline, the current context (cost of living, pandemic, increased policy and practice demands) is only serving to worsen this situation. Scotland clearly has a well-evidenced issue with foster care recruitment and retention that is worsening each year.

Yet, the number of family groups separated in foster care (25%) has remained relatively stable since 2017. Given overall decreasing capacity, an increase in family separations would not have been surprising. It is not possible to pinpoint why separations have stayed stable, but one possibility is the increased attention / efforts in keeping brothers and sisters together has helped prevent this situation from worsening, despite the unprecedented external pressures.

Using data collected by the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA), a report published in April 2022¹⁵ examined evidence about newborn babies and infants who become looked after away from home on a Compulsory Supervision Order (CSO) via the Children's Hearings System (CHS). From a random sample of 70 infants under the age of one who became looked after away from home on a CSO, between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019, the following key findings were made in relation to brothers and sisters:

- Four out of five of the infants (79%) had older brothers and/or sisters when they became looked after away from home.
- There was a complexity to this, with combinations of full-siblings, maternal and paternal half-siblings. Some infants also had adult siblings.
- The majority of infants with siblings had at least one sibling living with foster carers, kinship carers or adoptive parents.
- However, only 12 infants were initially placed with a sibling, which represents just a fifth (22%) of those who had at least one sibling.
- Twelve of the infants had a full or half brother or sister born in the two-year period after they became looked after away from home.

¹⁴https://www.careinspectorate.com/images/documents/Fostering_and_adoption_stats_report_2021-22.pdf

¹⁵ Cusworth et al., "Born into Care in Scotland."

- Two years after becoming looked after away from home on a CSO, less than a third of the infants in the sample with siblings were known to be living with at least one of their brothers and sisters.¹⁶

Local

Local authority level data is not available but is an area of focus for the Staying Together And Connected (STAC) Scottish Government Short Life Working Group on Siblings Data¹⁷.

A key finding from the participation project informing the work of STAC was that experiences demonstrated practice locally was falling far below that committed to in the Promise. This highlights a continuing disconnect between the quantitative evidence and qualitative evidence, with the former remaining the primary mechanism for monitoring. This disconnect is reflected in the framing of the priority work (“understanding impact and lived experience” rather than “data”) but is not as well reflected in the tiered priorities where the concrete actions and changes relate to the quantitative data while “consideration” is used in relation to changes in the inclusion of qualitative information.

¹⁶ Cusworth et al., 29.

¹⁷ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/staying-together-connected-getting-right-sisters-brothers-national-practice-guidance/pages/3/>

Promise Oversight Board

Writing REPORT TWO: Information
sources on Education

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Notes and Guidance

Content

This document contains information and evidence that the Promise Oversight Board considered when developing Report TWO.

It was compiled by The Promise Scotland at the Promise Oversight Board's request and covers key information and evidence up to and including April 2023. Its content is drawn from engagement The Promise Scotland has undertaken across sectors and organisations, and relevant, published, qualitative and quantitative data and information sources. It does not offer an exhaustive source of information on the theme of education and instead highlights key information and sources for the Promise Oversight Board to refer to as they reach their conclusions on progress for Report TWO.

References are included throughout where applicable.

Language

Where terminology such as 'looked after' appears, this is because it refers to specific data sets that continue to use this wording.

What has already been said

the promise

Schools in Scotland must be ambitious for care experienced children and ensure they have all they need to thrive, recognising that they may experience difficulties associated with their life story

Plan 21-24

Care experienced children and young people will receive all they need to thrive at school. There will be no barriers to their engagement with education and schools will know and cherish their care experienced pupils. School improvement plans will value and recognise the needs of their care experienced pupils with robust tracking of attendance and attainment so that support can be given early. Care experienced young people will be actively participating in all subjects and extracurricular activities in schools. The formal and informal exclusion of care experienced children from education will end. Schools will support and ensure care experienced young people go on to genuinely positive destinations, such as further education or employment

Change Programme ONE

Work is underway but is not yet sufficient.

Oversight Board Report ONE

Outcomes for care experienced children are not good enough, and there continues to be no alignment with the promise to end school exclusions.

Key work to date

- Following the [Muir Report](#), a [National Conversation on Education](#) was launched to encourage the widest range of stakeholders (including learners) to contribute towards education reform. The listening phase of the National Discussion on Education took place between September 21 and December 5 2022: it is reported that 26,000 young people took part in online assemblies as part of this exercise.
- The Improvement Service launched the Recovery and Delivery programme in April 2022, which supports "*ongoing improvements in Early Learning and Childcare services, and to support the new COVID Recovery Strategy workstream,*" alongside other efforts to improve ELC services across Scotland.¹
- Payment of the Care Experienced Student Bursary used to be linked to attendance (required 100% attendance), which resulted in many students not receiving financial support. The [HUB for SUCCESS](#) supported work in reviewing this policy, resulting in policy changes to focus on engagement, rather than punishment. The HUB for SUCCESS summarises this work: "*By listening, by taking*

¹ Cllr Shona Morrison and Sarah Gadsden, 'Improvement Service Annual Report 2021' (Improvement Service, November 2022).

views seriously and by working in partnership we were able to help students on an individual basis, but we were also able to address the structural and systemic barriers getting in the way of our learner's progress".²

- The [Care Inspectorate](#) commissioned an evaluation of the ELC Quality Improvement Programme, which *"explored the efficacy and impact the programme is having on improving outcomes and experiences for children, their families and the settings they attend".³* This evaluation surfaced work completed, as well as gaps:
 - The eligibility criteria limit the type of settings that can take place. The report suggests that it would be beneficial to expand the program.⁴
 - *"Research participants rated the quality of support provided through the programme very highly", but some settings require further support to engage with the resources.⁵*
 - Positive impact is discussed at length.⁶
 - Capacity and funding are the barriers for further implementation and improvement *"The current ELC Improvement Team does not have the capacity to support substantially more settings with the same level of support as its stands currently... Without continuation of funding, it is likely that many settings will struggle to make the level of improvements to the quality of care that has been possible while the programme has been ongoing".⁷*
- There has been significant work in support of delivery of Children and Young People's Engagement, Participation & Rights in the Additional Support for Learning programme under COSLA and Scottish Government. There are 14 recommendations in support of this theme, of these 3 are completed with the majority of the others ongoing.⁸ Future work includes:
 - A work plan from the Project Board, working closely with the ASL Network, to identify priority areas of work and how they can best support delivery of this work.⁹

² 'Spotlight on Good Practice: The Care Experienced Student Bursary' (HUB for SUCCESS (Support for University and College for Care Experienced People South East Scotland), August 2022), 2, <https://hubforsuccess.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Spotlight-on-Good-Practice.pdf>.

³ 'Evaluation to Measure and Understand in Greater Depth the Efficacy and Impact of the Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Improvement Programme' (Care Inspectorate, October 2022), 3, https://hub.careinspectorate.com/how-we-support-improvement/care-inspectorate-programmes-and-publications/early-learning-and-childcare-improvement-programme/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery.

⁴ 'Evaluation: ELC Improvement Programme', 44.

⁵ 'Evaluation: ELC Improvement Programme', 45.

⁶ 'Evaluation: ELC Improvement Programme', 45-46.

⁷ 'Evaluation: ELC Improvement Programme', 46-47.

⁸ 'Additional Support for Learning Review – Action Plan - 2nd Progress Report' (COSLA: Scottish Government, 30 November 2022), 5, <https://www.gov.scot/publications/additional-support-learning-review-action-plan-second-progress-report/>.

⁹ 'Additional Support for Learning Review – Action Plan - 2nd Progress Report', 10.

- The Behaviour in Scottish Schools Research has recently been commissioned. Fieldwork will be undertaken in early 2023, initial findings are due in Autumn 2023 and the final report is due in Spring 2024.¹⁰
- The national discussion to develop a vision for the future of education in Scotland launched on 21 September 2022. Extensive engagement is planned with children and young people with additional support needs.¹¹

¹⁰ 'Additional Support for Learning Review – Action Plan - 2nd Progress Report', 14.

¹¹ 'Additional Support for Learning Review – Action Plan - 2nd Progress Report', 15.

What has been heard through engagement

Many areas were prioritising work to tackle poverty in recognition of the impacts of poverty on attainment:

- Grants and digital equipment and devices for care experienced children and young people.
- Targeted work to increase uptake of free school meals and setting up breakfast clubs.
- Cost of school day.
- Pupil equity fund.
- Support to family to ensure they are receiving all rights and entitlements.

Many education settings had employed school-based counsellors and health and wellbeing officers, had prioritised support to access free physical activities, green spaces and recreation spaces, and support to take part in extracurricular activities.

A key tool in use was mapping to better understand the needs of children and young people who are struggling at school and work to identify and develop ways to measure and track outcomes using numerical data, whilst also training staff in and implementing trauma-informed responses and culture in schools

Many areas had virtual headteachers in place to support schools to ensure care experienced children's needs are being met.

Multi agency teams were identified as particularly useful in strengthening joint working between key partners in children's services, schools and police, such as improvement and development of multi-agency planning processes and sharing ownership and communication of risk.

Some areas had created posts, intended to ensure children with care experience and their families are supported to take part in school life, both in school and at home. e.g. mentoring, counselling services in schools, family link workers, outreach workers, home tutors. There was also reference to successful work of projects in increasing support to families to enable children to stay home and access education more flexibly, e.g. virtual schools and bespoke timetables and curriculum for care experienced children.

Support for young people transitioning from school to college and higher education was identified as key, such as supported study sessions digital platforms for care experienced students in higher education from the point of application, providing peer support and a way to share views, and 'named person' for each care experienced student, as well as targeted support for care experienced students wishing to access higher education.

Support with independent living skills and schemes such as Shannon's Box which is designed by care experienced young people to be given to all young people entering care to help young people settle and know they are not alone was reported as useful.

Progress with the Scottish Attainment Challenge was reported by all local authorities who have worked with their attainment advisors to review their progress and identify clear next steps. Whilst there are some commonalities, next steps are relevant to local authority contexts and where they are in their improvement journey. Key themes emerging include the effective use of the Attainment Scotland Fund (ASF), stretch aims and data. All of which are important to the successful implementation of the new SAC Framework.¹²

The Pupil Equity Fund was identified as a next step by the majority of local authorities. For some, progress involved reviewing the mechanisms for planning and reporting within the existing school improvement planning cycle and reporting on standards and qualities. Auditing of PEF plans to provide bespoke advice and guidance to schools is a feature of the progress being made by local authorities and, in many, this work is supported by the attainment advisor:¹³

- Although less than half of all local authorities have included a next step on data this has previously been a focus for many.¹⁴
- Half of all local authorities identified a wide range of data improvement outcomes in their next steps. More than half have made solid progress on those outcomes... Many local authorities have reviewed and improved the way data is collected and collated with some introducing new software and the management of data systems to deliver this. Key areas for the use and analysis of data includes the focus on improving outcomes for Care Experienced Children and Young People, those learners targeted through PEF and attendance and health and wellbeing.¹⁵
- The majority of local authorities explicitly identified improvements in their work to support Care Experienced Children and Young People (CECYP) in their next steps. Just under half were able to report improvements in supporting this group of children and young people. Some have made progress by working in partnership with third sector organisations.¹⁶
- Further developing Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL) with a focus on equity was included in the next steps by a third of local authorities. In relation

¹² 'Scottish Attainment Challenge: Recovery and Progress Report on 2021-22' (Education Scotland, 15 November 2022), 17, <https://education.gov.scot/education-scotland/news-and-events/news/education-scotland-publishes-the-scottish-attainment-challenge-recovery-and-progress-report-for-2021-22/>.

¹³ 'Scottish Attainment Challenge: Recovery and Progress Report on 2021-22', 5.

¹⁴ 'Scottish Attainment Challenge: Recovery and Progress Report on 2021-22', 19.

¹⁵ 'Scottish Attainment Challenge: Recovery and Progress Report on 2021-22', 7.

¹⁶ 'Scottish Attainment Challenge: Recovery and Progress Report on 2021-22', 8.

to the progress made, a number of local authorities have indicated that professional learning builds capacity and confidence in using data.¹⁷

¹⁷ 'Scottish Attainment Challenge: Recovery and Progress Report on 2021-22', 10.

Desktop analysis

Qualitative information

Analysis surfaced gaps in the areas of access, additional support needs, relationships, voice, and wellbeing. [Children in Scotland](#) suggest that reform in the areas of governance, policy coherence, and rights-based approaches, is needed to address these gaps.¹⁸

- Access - [UCAS](#) discussed care-experienced students' options and barriers for positive destinations, while [HUB for SUCCESS'](#) Evaluation of the Learning Explorers Pilot suggests solutions for widening access.¹⁹
- Additional Support Needs - [HUB for SUCCESS](#) and [Children in Scotland](#) surfaced concerns regarding ASN support in schools, particularly for those students in transition periods and for children who are unable to attend school.²⁰
- Poverty - [HUB for SUCCESS](#) and [COSLA](#) both touched on issues of poverty.²¹ [HUB for SUCCESS's](#) evaluation specifically raised: the delay of free school meals to all primary children, need for national guidance to ensure affordability of uniforms, and the issue of free public transport not including ferries.²²
- Relationships - [Children in Scotland](#) expressed concerns that the current approach to education creates barriers to positive relationships, including *"large class sizes, a focus on high-stake exams rather than pupil and staff wellbeing and teacher class contact time being too high"*.²³
- Voice - [Children in Scotland](#), [HUB for SUCCESS](#), and the Children's Commissioners of [Northern Ireland](#), [Scotland](#) and [Wales](#) highlighted the need for listening to children's voices and fostering participation.²⁴
- Wellbeing - [Children in Scotland](#) raised concerns that current initiatives (including the Pupil Equity Fund, the Attainment Challenge, and Personal and Social Education) are not having necessary impact. Aligned with this, [Children in](#)

¹⁸ 'Policy Briefing: Learning and Education', 2-4, 14.

¹⁹ 'Next Steps: What Is the Experience of Students from a Care Background in Education?' (Unite Foundation: UCAS, 30 November 2022), 5-6, https://www.ucas.com/next-steps-what-experience-students-care-background-education?hash=aZKGPUscIn70ypzKB0QE-1YObNszyE2iNz_xQjoVbSM; 'Three in Five with Experience of Being in Care given No Guidance When Applying to Higher Education' (Unite Foundation: UCAS, 30 November 2022), 2, <https://www.ucas.com/file/658616/download?token=j71YuiJT>; 'Reaching Back Earlier for Care Experienced Learners: An Evaluation of the Learning Explorers Pilot'.

²⁰ 'Policy Briefing: Learning and Education', 8-9; 'Reaching Back Earlier for Care Experienced Learners: An Evaluation of the Learning Explorers Pilot'.

²¹ 'Scottish Attainment Challenge: Recovery and Progress Report on 2021-22', 3; 'Reaching Back Earlier for Care Experienced Learners: An Evaluation of the Learning Explorers Pilot'.

²² 'Reaching Back Earlier for Care Experienced Learners: An Evaluation of the Learning Explorers Pilot'.

²³ 'Policy Briefing: Learning and Education', 7.

²⁴ 'Policy Briefing: Learning and Education', 5-6; 'Report of the Children's Commissioners: Examination of the Combined Sixth and Seventh Periodic Reports'; 'Reaching Back Earlier for Care Experienced Learners: An Evaluation of the Learning Explorers Pilot'.

[Scotland](#) expressed the view that the current assessment system does not support a wellbeing approach.²⁵

²⁵ 'Policy Briefing: Learning and Education', 6, 11, 13.

Quantitative information

- Education outcomes for looked after children have improved over the last decade. However, there are still large gaps compared with all pupils.²⁶
- Attainment for school leavers who were looked after within the last year has risen over the last ten years, especially at SCQF levels 5 and 6. This follows a similar pattern to attainment levels for all children. However, looked after children continue to have lower attainment than all children at all SCQF levels.²⁷
 - Looked after leavers who were in foster care or with friends or relatives had higher attainment than other placement types, especially at home with parents.²⁸
- Looked after school leavers are less likely to go to positive destinations than school leavers in general, especially higher education.²⁹
- The exclusion rate for looked after pupils was more than six times the rate for all pupils in 2020/21, but this gap has reduced since 2012/13.³⁰
- A lower proportion of looked after children achieve the [Curriculum for Excellence \(CfE\)](#) level relevant to their stage compared with all children across all organisers (subjects). The size of the gap between looked after children and all children varies across the different subjects.³¹
 - Achievement of CfE levels is lowest for those looked after at home and those looked after in residential accommodation.³²

²⁶ 'Education Outcomes for Looked After Children 2020/21' (Scottish Government, 28 July 2022), 1.

²⁷ 'Education Outcomes for Looked After Children 2020/21', 6.

²⁸ 'Education Outcomes for Looked After Children 2020/21', 6.

²⁹ 'Education Outcomes for Looked After Children 2020/21', 13.

³⁰ 'Education Outcomes for Looked After Children 2020/21', 25.

³¹ 'Education Outcomes for Looked After Children 2020/21', 29.

³² 'Education Outcomes for Looked After Children 2020/21', 29.

Promise Oversight Board

Writing REPORT TWO: Information
sources on Homelessness

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References are included throughout where applicable.

Language

Where terminology such as 'looked after' appears, this is because it refers to specific data sets that continue to use this wording.

What has already been said

the promise

Young adults for whom Scotland has taken on parenting responsibility must have a right to return to care and have access to services and supportive people to nurture them. Older care experienced people must have a right to access to supportive, caring services for as long as they require them. Those services and the people who work in them must have a primary focus on the development and maintenance of supportive relationships that help people access what they need to thrive.

Plan 21-24

Decisions about transitions for young care experienced people who move onto independent living or need to return to a caring environment, will be made based on individual need.

Each young care experienced adult will experience their transition as consistent, caring, integrated and focussed on their needs, not on 'age of services' criteria. Housing pathways for care experienced young people will include a range of affordable options that are specifically tailored to their needs and preferences. Youth homelessness experienced by young care experienced people will be eradicated and they will have no need for any emergency provision or for rough sleeping because options are available and planned.

Change Programme ONE

Work is underway but is not yet sufficient.

Oversight Board Report ONE

It is unacceptable for young people who have been 'looked after' to transition into the homelessness system. At present it the data is not sufficiently joined up to allow identification of care experienced people within all national datasets and for us to know with confidence the extent of the problem.

Key work to date

Following acceptance that the ambitions of the Ending Homelessness Together plan, published in 2017, have not matched up to realities on the ground, the Scottish Government and COSLA co-chaired a Homelessness Prevention Strategy Group which, in turn, proposed a Temporary Accommodation Task and Finish Group. In March 2023, the Task and Finish Group published their final report and recommendations¹ to reduce the number of people in temporary accommodation and the length of time spent there. Whilst the recommendations are mostly (although not exclusively) non-population specific, the known relationship between homelessness and care experience is not referenced or identified as a population subset requiring specific action.

The latest update from Scottish Government on their [Ending Homelessness Strategy](#) states that the implementation of "the prevention pathways for care leavers, young people and veterans has been temporarily paused." Instead, "due to capacity challenges", the focus is located on prevention pathways for women and children

¹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/temporary-accommodation-task-finish-group-final-report-recommendations/>

experiencing domestic abuse and people leaving prison². It is possible the pathway will be resumed by the end of 2023 or the beginning of 2024, particularly pressing given the time-bound nature of actions within [Plan 21-24](#) to eradicate youth homelessness.

The '[A Way Home Coalition](#)' has taken a lead role on influencing the youth homelessness pathway with [CELCIS](#) and the [Rock Trust](#) progressing the recommendations.

Research in Practice's article on transitional safeguarding questioned if protected status would support young people better; called for changes to eligibility criteria housing support; and highlighted the need for individual pathway planning and support, to best prepare and teach young people skills before they turn 18.³

[Scottish Government and COSLA undertook a joint consultation exercise on the Prevention of Homelessness duties](#) and published responses in November 2022. Their aim is to introduce legislation in the upcoming Housing Bill in year two of this Parliament, which leads to system change and person centred and trauma-informed service responses to meet individual needs to better prevent homelessness, while providing greater choice and control for those at risk of homelessness. The new duties include a new statutory duty for all public sector staff to 'ask and act' when they think someone they are engaging with may be at risk of homelessness. Each of the public bodies considered would need to identify whether the people they work with have a risk of homelessness or are experiencing housing problems, and then they would have a different role and opportunities to act on this information. In some cases, the action required would be a referral to the local authority.

² 'Ending Homelessness Together: [COSLA] Annual Report to the Scottish Parliament October 2022' (Scottish Government: COSLA, October 2022).

³ Harley, Luwam, and Toni, 'Bridging the Gap with Transitional Safeguarding', *Research in Practice* (blog), 12 October 2022, <https://www.researchinpractice.org.uk/children/news-views/2022/october/bridging-the-gap-with-transitional-safeguarding/>.

What has been heard through engagement

Pathways for care experienced young people continue to be insufficient, resulting in the continued use of the 'homelessness system' for these young people. Whilst support has been identified as insufficiently accessible, localised and or tailored, limited data has been available to prove the efficacy of interventions, target populations at risk of homelessness, or reflect the true size of the homeless population, or intersectional areas impacting homelessness with limited insights available on those not engaging with services.

Challenges cited include capacity, recruitment, and retention in Through care and Aftercare (TCAC) teams. One indication that this had led in some instances to TCAC being de-prioritised by necessity due to the resultant additional pressures added to other children's social work teams, resulting in inconsistent standards of service for young people. It is not clear if this is an isolated example or a wider pattern from the limited information we currently have.

The lack of available housing stock to meet the current needs of the population, including Residential Care and those supporting Foster Carers and Kinship arrangements remain an ongoing challenge, affecting the ability to provide ongoing support and maintain relationships.

The national minimum wage and ongoing cost of living crisis continue to compound access to and sustaining affordable housing, as do some Benefits being a Reserved matter.

There were indications in the engagement materials that the numbers of young people staying in 'continuing care placements' were increasing, as well as the number of active plans aimed at supporting young people into adulthood and independent living. One source indicated that they had seen numbers of young people accessing an aftercare service increase during the pandemic in response to increased hardship and isolation.

Additional activity has centred on projects aimed at supporting young people to develop the skills needed to live independently, with help around practical, homemaking and life skills such as money management, cooking, shopping, cleaning, and home maintenance.

Local areas were putting a range of measures in place to address this [Plan 21-24](#) action including:

- Programmes to support young people who are transitioning out of children's homes to enable them to return or to stay longer, and to convert foster care 'placements' to supported carer settings for young people who are not yet ready to move to greater independence.

- Projects aimed at supporting young people to develop the skills needed to live independently, with help around practical things such as:
 - Ensuring every child leaving care has a digital device, bank account and passport
 - Money management, cooking, shopping, cleaning and home maintenance
 - Providing 'trial' flats that support young people to stay for a few weeks to get a better sense of what is involved in independent living and what kinds of support they would like or need to enable them to transition.
 - Some areas were participating in the National House Project, which is aimed at enabling young care experienced people to develop a peer community with others who are also leaving care, and to live together in a home that supports them to develop the skills need to live interdependently and provide one another with practical and emotional supports and skills.
- Support to access education, training and employment opportunities, including:
 - Financial support to maintain tenancies whilst working.
 - Ensuring support with accessing bursaries and entitlements for accessing further education.
 - Ensuring young people had electronic devices.
 - Schemes aimed at providing work experience and paid opportunities in the council to build skills and confidence in their transition from education to employment.
- Practical, emotional and mental wellbeing support.
- Some indication of areas attempting to increasing opportunities for young people to be heard and influence how transition and aftercare services designed and improved e.g.
 - Deciding the name of new services.
 - A steering group of care experienced young people actively involved in redesigning the referral process and improving housing pathway.
 - Looking at improving the way formal documents are written to be more accessible and reflective of the young person's views and wants e.g. having a pathway plan, with pathway reviews written in the form of a reflective letter to the young person.

There was one mention of a project put in place to support young people who are not eligible for statutory provision but have been looked after at home or within a children's house prior to their 16th birthday.

Finally, work was also described that involved streamlining processes to make them more seamless and timely, such as appointing coordination roles to work between social work and housing teams, identifying single points of contact within teams, joint multiagency working to create 'one stop shop' style service for young people transitioning out of care and the creation of housing protocols to ensure alignment with the promise and that young people with care experienced were given priority access to housing.

Desktop Analysis

Qualitative information

There is limited qualitative data to prove efficacy of interventions, to target populations at risk of homelessness, or to know the true size of the homeless population (e.g. not taking into account “young people staying with friends or families, in unsafe, precarious, or overcrowded housing”).⁴

Particular challenges with supporting those moving on from care and reducing homelessness include:

- Lack of awareness of available support, especially for private tenants.⁵
- Lack of local support and housing solutions, which enables individuals and families to be supported in their area (e.g. temporary accommodation).⁶
- Need for diverse and tailored solutions, which take into account the varied other factors affecting people at risk of homelessness.⁷
- Need for investment in poverty reduction and social housing: “Countries with poverty reduction strategies and strong welfare states have lower rates of child poverty and lower numbers of young people presenting as homeless. Additionally, substantial investments in social housing have proven to drastically reduce homelessness across all age groups.”⁸

Homelessness disproportionately affects young people (ages 16-24); within this population, young women, and care-experienced young people are at higher risk of homelessness or housing instability.⁹ Risk factors for youth homelessness includes: *“experience of a range of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), running away, truanting or being excluded from school, or being an LGBTQ+ young person.”*¹⁰ Immediate causes for youth homelessness are primarily related to relationship breakdown, with a root cause of poverty. The demographic most affected by poverty and at “risk of destitution” is single men aged under 25.¹¹

Current pathways do not include all care-experienced young people, but only those who are labelled a ‘looked after child’ on/after their 16th birthday or who are a ‘care leaver’: Young people who are care experienced or on the edges of care may have similar

⁴ Dunn; ‘Youth Homelessness Prevention Pathway: For All Young People’.

⁵ Dunn, ‘75 Ways to Prevent Homelessness’.

⁶ Shelter Scotland to Nicola Sturgeon MSP First Minister, ‘Emergency Action Plan: Letter to the First Minister’, 29 August 2022.

⁷ ‘COSLA’s Annual Report to the Scottish Parliament 2022’.

⁸ ‘Youth Homelessness Prevention Pathway: For All Young People’.

⁹ Dunn, ‘75 Ways to Prevent Homelessness’; ‘Youth Homelessness Prevention Pathway: For All Young People’ (A Way Home Scotland Coalition, 22 March 2021).

¹⁰ Dunn, ‘75 Ways to Prevent Homelessness’.

¹¹ ‘Youth Homelessness Prevention Pathway: For All Young People’.

experiences to care leavers but do not qualify for corporate parenting supports and are considered within the general population.¹² Homelessness system is the “default response”, and so the ‘system’ is slow to change towards multi-agency working¹³.

¹² ‘Youth Homelessness Prevention Pathway: For All Young People’.

¹³ Dunn, ‘75 Ways to Prevent Homelessness’.

Quantitative information

In February 2023, the Scottish Housing Regulator published a review of Scottish Homelessness Services¹⁴. The number of applications received by councils during 2021/22 from households looking for help with homelessness increased by 4% on the previous year to just over 35,000, but this was below the level recorded in 2019/20 (see table below). The Regulator also heard anecdotal evidence that rates of applications are increasing during the current year, suggesting there could be a return to the figures seen in 2019/20 at a minimum.

The Scottish Housing Regulator's review also identified there were 14,214 households in temporary accommodation at 31 March 2022; an increase of 3% from 2021 (13,753) and higher than 2020 (11,807). The number of children in temporary accommodation increased markedly by 16%, and higher than 2020 (7,355). The number of households in temporary accommodation increased further to 14,458 at 30 September 2022, with the number of children in temporary accommodation increasing to 9,130.

Homelessness (applications and individuals) increased in Scotland in 2021/22: the 28,882 homeless households in 2021/22 contained a total of 46,964 people, comprising 32,592 adults and 14,372 children. The number of adults increased by 6%, while the number of children increased by 17% compared to 2020/21.¹⁵ The increase can largely be explained as being a return to pre-COVID levels (and due to addressing backlogs from COVID).

A quarter of households who make homeless applications include children. 2021/22 saw the highest number of children in temporary accommodation, although the rapid increase from 2020/21 is due to a return in pre-COVID numbers.¹⁶

Timescales are increasing for homelessness cases to be assessed and then closed. The years chosen for comparison by [Scottish Government](#) in the publication "Homelessness in Scotland 2021-22" are inconsistent, and need further analysis to determine what the trajectory of timescales are, and how COVID has affected them:

- It takes an average of 19 days for a homelessness case to be assessed. This is an increase of 3 days compared to 2020/21 but has fallen from 29 days in 2004/05.¹⁷

¹⁴ <https://www.housingregulator.gov.scot/landlord-performance/national-reports/thematic-work/homelessness-services-in-scotland-a-thematic-review-february-2023>

¹⁵ 'Homelessness in Scotland 2021-22' (Scottish Government, 18 August 2022), <https://www.gov.scot/publications/homelessness-scotland-2021-22/documents/>.

¹⁶ Lucie Dunn, '75 Ways to Prevent Homelessness' (Crisis Scotland, 8 April 2022); Shelter Scotland to Nicola Sturgeon MSP First Minister, 'Emergency Action Plan: Letter to the First Minister', 29 August 2022.

¹⁷ 'Homelessness in Scotland 2021-22'.

- It takes 256 days on average from assessment to closure for cases assessed as homeless. This is similar to 2020/21 (255 days) but an increase from 225 days in 2019/20.¹⁸

Alongside these figures, there is a decrease in new homes being built, long waiting lists for social housing, and increasing rents in the private sector.¹⁹

At 31st July 2022, there were 8,132 young people eligible for aftercare. Of these, 394 (5%) had one or more experiences of homelessness². This figure is likely to be an underestimate as not all local authorities provide homelessness data, and not all those eligible for aftercare received it (4,024, 49% did not) and therefore their situation was not known. This figure has remained stable since 2018, despite policy and legislative interventions.

¹⁸ 'Homelessness in Scotland 2021-22'.

¹⁹ 'Scottish Housing Emergency Action Plan' (Shelter Scotland, August 2022).

Including details of any external contractor involvement in the production of Report TWO (name of contractor(s), their role, the terms of reference and any agreement in place) and what costs were associated with the production of that report and the involvement of any/all external contractors.

Two external contractors provided services in the production of Report TWO:

Name	Role	Cost
Alan Roden / Ebor Political Consultants	Redrafting, writing, editing	£6,000.00
The Lane Agency	Design, graphics, layout, artwork, printing	£10,485.90